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LIFE OF  
SAYAJI RAO III  
*MAHARAJA OF BARODA*



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HIS HIGHNESS MAHARAJA SAYAJI RAO GAEKWAR III  
*Sena Khas Khel, Sansher Bahadur, Farzand-i-Khas-i-Dowlat-i-Inglisbia, G.C.S.I.,  
G.C.I.E., Maharaja of Baroda*

LIFE OF  
SAYAJI RAO III  
*MAHARAJA of BARODA*

*By* STANLEY RICE  
AUTHOR OF 'THE CHALLENGE OF ASIA'

VOLUME I

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*To*  
THE PEOPLE OF BARODA



## PREFACE

THE Indian States are, compared with British India, very slightly known, nor, so far as I am aware, has the adequate life of any Indian Prince been published in England—such a life as would convey to an English public the trials and difficulties, the hopes and aspirations, as well as the domestic life, sorrows, and pleasures of the ruler who, if not independent in the sense which is understood of the great countries of Europe, is yet in a position to make or mar the happiness of millions.

The Maharaja of Baroda was and still is among the foremost of the Indian Princes who have laboured for the good of their people. He is generally known as the 'Gaekwar', but this is a mistake which has been hallowed by usage. Gaekwar is the family name, and it is as reasonable to speak of the Gaekwar of Baroda as it would have been to talk of Bonaparte of France. In his own dominions he is always called the Maharaja, and the official designation of the Government of India is the Maharaja Gaekwar, which corresponds to the titles in the sister States of Indore and Gwalior of the Maharaja Holkar and the Maharaja Sindhia.

Nor is it true to say with Sir Sidney Lee that the Maharaja came from the humblest origin. He was a Gaekwar; he belonged to the ruling family though in a collateral line, and though his family was living in unconsidered obscurity it was of some local importance in the village. A legend has grown out of this that the Maharaja was a beggar boy, a sort of counterpart to the girl who attracted King Cophetua.

The Maharaja is a great man, with a career behind him of which any one might be proud. Baroda covers an area of some 8,100 square miles, and has a population



of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  millions. Compared with the whole of India Baroda is but a tiny fraction, and the peculiar situation of Indian States, almost if not quite unique in the world, takes away that fascinating interest which we find in the lives of great statesmen who have had to deal with foreign affairs in all parts of the globe. But it is no mean achievement to have raised Baroda from the position of a medieval State, full of corruption and oppression, and dependent for its life on the whims and caprices of the ruler, to a foremost place among the States of India, with a government framed on constitutional lines, with just and reasonable laws, and instinct with all the progress of modern science and modern wisdom.

The language of my quotations may be at times quaint, even obscure. Let it be remembered that the writers were nearly all Indians writing in a foreign language, and that the materials from which I have drawn have been for the most part in English written by Marathas and Gujeratis. The wonder is not that they make mistakes but that they make so few.

I am not at all conscious of the defects of this book; if I were I should have corrected them. One disadvantage I cannot escape and one defect I cannot cure. For national—or for racial—reasons an Englishman cannot look at things with the eyes of an Indian. Sympathy he may have and understanding, but intuition in the fullest sense of the word he never will have. Fundamentally there is little or no difference; all the civilized world is agreed upon the foundations of public and private morality. It is in relatively unimportant matters that variations occur and are bound to occur, as indeed they do in the various countries of Europe. The Englishman, for example, admits the undeniable fact of caste, and its enormous power; he respects Indian susceptibilities, but regarding

ceremonial pollution as he does, 'as a thing to read about in the Old Testament, a custom long ago dead and buried, he cannot share that instinctive feeling which forbids a man to accept a cup of tea at his hands. The general proposition might easily be supported by instances more subtle than this, but I shall not be betrayed into an essay. Happily the hero of these pages, the Maharaja of Baroda, has so ordered his conduct according to canons, acknowledged and understood in the West, that the task of an historian becomes to that extent easier. Still, the disadvantage does exist, but, as I said before, I cannot help it.

So many have helped me by supplying materials both oral and written that I cannot name them all. But I have received special help from Mr. R. K. Randive, the Manager of the Political Office in Baroda; from Mr. Joshi and his staff, as well as from Mr. Nene, who all translated valuable Marathi material; from Mr. Ashabhai, who typed the whole manuscript; and last, by no means least, from my friend the Dewan of the State, Rao Bahadur V. T. Krishnama Chari, whose advice has been invaluable. Whatever of merit there may be, let it be ascribed to these willing helpers: whatever of blame, I reserve to myself. This is my inalienable right, for the biography is in no sense official; nor is it authorized, except to the extent that all relevant material I have sought has been placed at my disposal. Not a single line of the story I have written has been seen by the Maharaja Gaekwar.

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## HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

IN 1664 the great Shivaji, founder of the Maratha Empire, surprised and plundered the town of Surat. This was the first contact of the Marathas with Gujerat, and the object was definitely the acquisition of booty on which to a great extent depended the successful issue of his rebellion against the Moghul Empire. Aurangzib, though in some respects a great administrator and by no means to be despised as a general, had alienated all his Hindu subjects by his intense bigotry, and the Empire had grown so unmanageable that it was difficult to control the outlying districts, all the more when a formidable chieftain, gifted with determination and resource, had stirred his countrymen into rebellion. The invasion was no more than a raid, repeated in 1670; but it served to bring the Marathas into the country.

It was not, however, till after the deaths both of Aurangzib and of Shivaji that the Marathas began to interfere directly in the affairs of Gujerat. About the year 1716 one Khande Rao Dabhade, who was supporting one Musalman lieutenant against another, established himself between Nandod and Rajpipla. Such were his services to the Maratha cause that on his return to Satara he was created Senapati, Commander-in-Chief, by Ram Raja, who had succeeded to the Maratha throne; and two years later the Peshwa obtained from the feeble Moghul Government the authority to collect the well-known Maratha levies from the Province of Gujerat. In 1721 Khande Rao was found with a Maratha army in support of one Alam Ali Khan against Asaf Jah the Nizam ul Mulk, and though Alam Ali was killed, the Marathas behaved well under their leader Damaji Rao Gaekwad, who was promoted by Raja Shahu to be second in command with the title of 'Samsher Bahadur', the illustrious

swordsman, a title which Sayaji Rao Maharaja bears to this day. Damaji died soon after, and his post and title devolved on his nephew Pilaji.

Pilaji Rao Gaekwad is the founder of the dynasty which afterwards came to rule Baroda. He first established himself in Khandesh, but as the country was claimed by another Maratha chief Kandaji Kadam Bande he moved to Songadh, a hill fort in the wild country in the east of the present Navsari District. This fort still exists, though in a ruined state, and in it are kept a bed representing the Gadi and the portrait of the Maharaja, symbols that here was the cradle of the Gaekwar fortunes. The country is no longer wild nor difficult of access, though the fort itself can only be reached by a steep climb.

From here he proceeded to consolidate his position, making raids into the surrounding country for the purpose of collecting tribute. Songadh continued to be the headquarters, but by degrees he seems to have been drawn into the everlasting civil war. The annals of those times are very confusing. Musalman allied himself with Maratha and Maratha with Musalman with bewildering and kaleidoscopic changes. One moon would see the Maratha chieftains making common cause, the next might find them in opposite camps, while in the third they would perhaps have mutually exchanged allies; it is difficult even to follow the thread of any one man's fortunes through the tangle. In 1725 after various vicissitudes Pilaji Rao was in alliance with a Mahomedan General Rustam Ali Khan, but the strength of these alliances was severely tested when in a battle with the forces of the Nizam, to whom the Maratha Bande had attached himself, Pilaji Rao turned his guns upon his ally, thereby gaining for himself half the chauth,<sup>1</sup> the whole of which had been promised to Bande. Quarrels not unnaturally broke out. The Nizam's Deputy,

<sup>1</sup> 'Chauth' = quarter of the revenue.

Hamid Khan, endeavoured to compose them by assigning the district north of the Mahi river to Bande, and those to the south including Baroda to Pilaji Rao, but this seems to have been for the purpose of collecting the chauth and not in full sovereignty as the Nizam was the overlord, and neither Maratha chief was independent of the Maratha Government, whose principal agent in the country was the Senapati.

The Court of Delhi then took a hand. They superseded Hamid Khan and repudiated the concessions granted to the Maratha Generals, who fell back before the onslaught of the new Viceroy. The Satara Government was also growing uneasy at the apparent accession of power and wealth by their subordinate officers who were on the road to independence. But the two Maratha chiefs joined forces and defied the Viceroy, who, receiving no assistance from Delhi, listened to the overtures from the Peshwa and granted the right of levying chauth and Sardeshmukhi throughout the Province. The Delhi Court repudiated these arrangements, and sent the Raja of Jodhpur to take the place of the discredited Viceroy. The issue, however, was now between the Maratha chiefs and the Satara Government, and at the battle of Bhilapur in 1731 the Peshwa utterly defeated the confederate army, Pilaji Rao barely escaping with his life.

But the complicated quarrels of the times distracted the Peshwa's attention to other spheres and he thought it impolitic to press his advantage to the complete discomfiture of the Maratha chief. He appointed the minor son of the Senapati, who had been killed in the battle, to his father's place, and Pilaji Rao was to be his mutalik or deputy with the added title of Sena Khas Khel, the Leader of the Sovereign Band. Pilaji Rao then turned his arms against the Imperial Viceroy and not without success; driven by extremity or prompted by revenge, the Viceroy plotted



the death of his enemy and Pilaji was assassinated at Dakor in 1732.

Abhayasing, the Viceroy, had however only rid himself of one enemy to raise up a more formidable one in his place. Damaji Rao was spurred to action by the double incentive of maintaining what had been won and of revenging his father's death. At first fortune smiled on the Viceroy. Damaji was driven out of Baroda, but after performing the funeral rites of Pilaji at Savli, a place which is revered in consequence, he retired to Songadh, whence he issued at the head of his forces and in 1734 he recaptured Baroda, which has ever since been in the possession of the Gaekwars. In a subsequent expedition from Songadh, where he had gathered a formidable army, he took many strong places in the east of Gujerat and raided the Jodhpur country. Abhayasing, anxious for his own dominions, abandoned Gujerat, and the subsequent events resulted in the consolidation and extension of Damaji Rao's power there. Meanwhile the Court of Delhi, which had dismissed Abhayasing, restored him openly, but secretly instructed his successor to take Ahmedabad, which was held by Ratansing for his Rajput master; and the bidding began for the adherence of Damaji Rao. Momin Khan, who had then taken the place of Abhayasing, won the day by the offer of one half the revenues of Gujerat, one half the city of Ahmedabad, and a share in the whole district of Viramgam in lieu of Cambay. Ahmedabad was taken and, in spite of the murmurs and indeed of the open opposition of the Musalmans, Momin Khan kept his promises, and the power of Damaji rapidly increased.

The barometer of his fortunes continued to rise and fall. He was always ready to take any side which opposed the Peshwa, and in 1749, after the death of Raja Shahu of Satara, he espoused the pretensions of the Raja of Kol-

hapur, who was put forward by the Rani, a bitter enemy of the Peshwa Balaji. But the latter triumphed. Balaji became the Maratha counterpart of the Mayor of the Palace, and the Government, which now made Poona its capital, was in the hands of the Brahmans. It appears to have been the ascendancy of this caste which so stiffened Damaji's resistance to and dislike of the Peshwa and he willingly obeyed the call of Tara Bai, the Queen-Mother, to free the young king at Satara and to deliver all Maharashtra from this galling yoke. Descending from Songadh at the head of a respectable force he defeated the troops sent to oppose him, but in a second engagement he was forced to retire. He halted to await the arrival of reinforcements but found himself between the Peshwa's army and another which was forming in his rear. In this predicament he tried to enter into negotiations with the Peshwa, who pretended to acquiesce, enticed him within striking distance and treacherously seized him, afterwards plundering the Gaekwar Camp. Damaji and his Karbhari (agent) were imprisoned, but the Gaekwar flag was kept flying by Kedarji Gaekwar. The Karbhari, however, managed to escape; he went to Poona in disguise and, being discovered, fled to Songadh with the result that Damaji was more closely confined and loaded with fetters.

But fortune had not done with Damaji. The Peshwa, in spite of strenuous efforts to recover Gujerat from the Moghul and the Gaekwar, found himself foiled, and the Musalman Javan Mard Khan began to raise his head in Kathiawar. There there had been a state of affairs bordering on anarchy. The chiefs of the numerous petty States were almost all foreigners, who in their quarrels with one another recognized no other law than that might is right. Each State was an armed camp against its neighbour and each drew from the unwilling people as much revenue as would suffice to keep it in a perpetual state of adequate

defence. The first Damaji Rao, having discovered the ease with which contributions could be levied upon and plunder obtained from a country so divided, made annual incursions into the Peninsula, but forbore to establish his power there by any territorial acquisitions. Damaji Rao, the grandson, laid the greater part of Kathiawar under contribution.

The Peshwa therefore judged it the wiser policy to come to terms with the prisoner. Damaji Rao agreed to pay 15 lakhs as arrears due, to cede to the Peshwa the half of Gujerat and of all future conquests, whether in land or money, to maintain an army of 10,000 horse in Gujerat, to furnish a contingent to the Peshwa's army in the Deccan, and to contribute to the support of the puppet King in Satara. The territories in Gujerat which were already conquered and settled were divided upon a money basis giving to each party rather under 25 lakhs of revenue. The Gaekwar also obtained in what may be called the county of Surat, districts which were estimated to bring in a further 3 lakhs for the support of his family. In addition to this arrangement it was agreed, on the principle of dividing the skin before the bear was killed, that the parties should share a number of other districts and cities, prominent among them being Ahmedabad and Surat. Many of the names both in the settled and unsettled tracts are now familiar in Baroda State as belonging to the Maharaja—Baroda itself, Navsari, Gandevi, Vijapur, as well as Pattan, Visnagar and Sidhpur, which latter group fell originally to the share of the Peshwa but was afterwards granted at his request to Damaji.

Further clauses of the treaty stipulated that the Gaekwar and the Peshwa should co-operate in driving out the Musalman, and the tribute, or more nakedly the plunder, which resulted from these efforts was to be divided in proportion to the number of troops engaged, but the

territories when subsequently settled were to be equally shared. These districts included the peninsula of Kathiawar, and the familiar names occur of Navanagar, now the property of the Jam, of Junagadh, the territory of a Nawab, and of Cutch, which is now ruled by the Maharao, and in addition to these stipulations there was yet another clause which related in meticulous detail the expectations of each party from Mulukgiri expeditions. This system had been employed by the Musalmans and it was continued and developed by the Marathas. It implied the right of sending armed forces into any given part of the country to make what collections they could; naturally enough, such exactions were irregular and were seldom paid except under compulsion.

The treaty of 1752-3 marks an important epoch in the fortunes of the Gaekwar house. It signalized the cessation of the hostility between the Peshwa and the Gaekwar, openly at any rate, whatever sentiments Damaji might have cherished in secret. It settled, in so far as treaties could settle, a part of his conquest upon Damaji without fear of Poona, and it provided as far as possible for a lasting friendship upon an agreed basis for the future. The Musalmans were hardly a power to be reckoned with; the days of Aurangzib had departed and the star of the Moghul Empire was fast paling before the rising sun of the Peshwas. There were to be flashes of spirit here and there, but the glory had departed from the house of Timur.

One of these flashes was exhibited in the person of Javan Mard Khan, whose spirited defence of Ahmedabad against the combined forces of Damaji Rao, Raghunath Rao, and other Maratha chiefs did not achieve the success it deserved. Ahmedabad surrendered and its capitulation was the crowning act of a successful campaign. The conquest then made practically extinguished the Musalman

power in Gujerat, which was henceforth divided according to the terms of the treaty of 1752. In 1755 the Musalmans again showed a gleam of their old spirit when the Nawab of Cambay suddenly seized Ahmedabad. He was, however, eventually bought off. The Maratha power in Gujerat had been too firmly established to be seriously shaken by isolated acts of this kind.

In 1761 came the awful disaster of Panipat, where the flower of the Maratha armies went down before Ahmad-shah Abdalli. Damaji Rao was in the cataclysm, and his presence shows that the old strife between Peshwa and Gaekwar was now healed. He seems to have borne himself as a brave soldier should, and in company with Ibrahim Khan Gardi fell upon the Rohillas with much success at a time when fortune seemed to be smiling on the Maratha arms. But when the field was irretrievable and Holkar had abandoned the struggle, Damaji Rao rode off, thus saving his own life when there was nothing else that he could save.

The defeat of Panipat inspired the Musalmans of Gujerat with new hope. It was not destined to bear fruit. The Peshwa had lost his army but not his power. Damaji joined with his agent not only to suppress risings but to acquire further territory, especially from the family of Javan Mard. The little State of Idar, an offshoot of Jodhpur, was also made tributary, and tribute which had long before been levied by Akbar upon Rajpipla was reimposed. Originally fixed at 40,000 rupees, it was raised to 49,000 and remained at that figure until 1785. Then the Gaekwars of Baroda took advantage of the helplessness of the State to make heavier and heavier demands, until in 1813 the whole State came under the Gaekwar management. Finally, the British intervened and fixed the tribute at 65,000 rupees; further disputes between the States were settled by the transfer of certain villages to Baroda, and the right to

collect customs was conceded on an annual payment of Rs. 13,351.

It has been said above that the expeditions of Damaji into Kathiawar were for the purpose of tribute and plunder and not for the acquisition of land. There were, however, some exceptions to this general rule. That part of the Kathiawar Peninsula which is known as Amreli District, and which is even now part of the Maharaja's dominions, was at the time of the first irruptions of Damaji held by three parties, Hindus called Kathis; some Sayads who held from the Emperor at Delhi; and the Fouzdar of Junagadh, who was subordinate to the Subedar of Ahmedabad. Damaji gradually absorbed the lands of the two former, partly by annexation on failure to pay the assessment, and partly by the surrender to him of lands the owners of which could not resist the pressure of local chiefs. About the same time marriage with a girl of Lathi State brought a dowry of some few villages in the sub-district of Damnagar, and these acquisitions were subsequently enlarged by Vithal Rao Devaji between 1809 and 1820. They are at present the bulk of the possessions in Kathiawar which are directly administered by the Government of Baroda.

The latent hostility of Damaji Rao to the Brahman Government of the Peshwas was not long in showing itself after the death of Balaji. The accession to power of a youth, afterwards famous as the Peshwa Madhav Rao, brought into prominence his intriguing uncle Raghunath Rao. Ever since the partition of 1752 Damaji Rao had allowed his enmity to sleep, but, true to his instinct, he now allied himself with Raghunath Rao. His ever-increasing hostility to the Peshwa brought upon him the vengeance of the latter. In 1768 Raghunath Rao was surprised and defeated by the Peshwa in person, who took to Poona as prisoners both him and Damaji's son

Govind Rao. Damaji himself was required to pay an increased tribute together with 3 years' arrears computed at 15½ lakhs and a fine for contumacy of some 23 lakhs. He agreed, but before the treaty was ratified he died.

## II

Damaji Rao may perhaps be condemned by the judgement of posterity as an invader whose rise to power was upon the spoils of an unoffending country. But he did no more than what others were doing their best to do; the only charge that can be laid against him is that he did it more successfully. In the break-up of the Moghul Empire under the hammer-blows of the Marathas every man was for himself. There was a regular *saute qui pent*. It is the period of lawlessness and anarchy, of incessant war and rebellion during the later years of Aurangzib and the times of his degenerate successors which justified the British claim to have restored peace and contentment to the country. There were wars before Aurangzib, just as there were wars—plenty of them—before the British could really settle down to the task of reconstruction and administration, and the most distracted period was that which followed the death of the last of the great Moghul Emperors. Damaji Rao had held on to his conquests through all the vicissitudes of fortune in which more than once it seemed as though some guardian angel alone saved him from disaster. Pilaji Rao had raised the fortunes of the Gaekwars to a position of respect, if not of eminence: it was left for Damaji to carry on the work until he had carved a kingdom for himself. The Peshwa Government of Poona was perhaps the only Government which emerged strong and well established upon settled lines during all that period of storm and tumult, but the long effort of Damaji had not gone unrewarded and the heritage he left to the Gaekwars

has blossomed through processes of evolution into the Baroda State which we know to-day.

The quarrels that immediately broke out amongst the surviving Gaekwars are proof, if proof were needed, that there was something substantial to quarrel about. They might indeed have ended in the extinction of the family if similar dissensions had not at the same time distracted the Court of Poona. The rival claimants to the rights of the Gaekwars were Govind Rao, the son of Damaji by a first wife, and Sayaji Rao, the son by a second wife but actually the elder of the two. Sayaji Rao was, however, of weak intellect, and his place was therefore taken, nominally in support of his brother but actually in his own interest, by Fateh Sinh, the eldest son of the third wife Gangabai. On the question of recognition the Poona Government vacillated. They first recognized Govind Rao, who had been prisoner in Poona since the defeat of Damaji at Dhodap when Damaji himself had been captured. Later on Fateh Sinh induced them to reverse their decision, ostensibly on the ground of learned Brahman opinion but, it would seem, actually in consequence of certain considerations offered as the price of recognition. Matters were further complicated by the appearance of a third party. This was Khande Rao, brother of Damaji, who had been given a small principality carved out of the Gaekwar gains, and who now took the part of one or other nephew, as seemed best to suit his own interests. He does not seem to have accomplished much and the chief result of his intervention was to distract still further the already distracted country.

Meanwhile, stirring events had taken place at Poona. The death of the Peshwa Madhava Rao was followed by the murder of his brother Narayan Rao, and Raghunath Rao disputed the succession of Madhava Rao, the young son of the Peshwa Narayan Rao. Raghunath Rao had



recognized Govind Rao as Sena Khas Khel, thereby again reversing, so far as he was able, the decision in favour of Sayaji Rao. The British were now induced to take a hand in the civil war, 'dazzled', as the Chronicle says with probability, 'by the hope of acquiring Basscin, Salsette and the district round Surat'.<sup>1</sup> They had come into prominence by the capture of Broach in 1772, and Fateh Sinh had shown great anxiety to share in the spoils; his overtures were rejected at the time and eventually the Company's troops were found ranged on the side of Raghunath Rao and Govind Rao against those of Fateh Sinh and the rightful Peshwa. The campaign was indecisive. The British troops bore themselves with credit but were ill-supported, and in 1775 the Governor-General repudiated the whole treaty by which the British had taken part in the war, thus abandoning the cause of Raghunath Rao and leaving matters where they were. Raghunath withdrew and the Gaekwars were left to fight out their own quarrels.

The Peshwa for political reasons now veered round once more and made a settlement which distinctly favoured Fateh Sinh. But in March 1776 a treaty was concluded between the Peshwa's Government and the British Government by which the latter were secured in the possession of Broach and of adjoining territory. The Gaekwar's Government long disputed this surrender, but the districts remained in British possession, and the cessions were confirmed by treaty in November 1778.

In 1779 war broke out between the British and the Poona Government and Fateh Sinh was induced, or compelled by the force of circumstances, to join the former, to whom he was loyal throughout the campaign. The avowed object was to sweep away the Peshwa's authority in Gujerat and to divide the country between the allies,

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda Gazetteer*, vol. i, p. 471.

Fateh Sinh to take the districts north of the Mahi river, and the British those south of the Tapti. Fateh Sinh was to be independent and to pay no tribute. But the danger which threatened in the south of India, where the Nizam and Hyder Ali, of Mysore fame, had entered into an alliance with the Marathas, compelled the British to break off the war, with the result that after two campaigns and much waste of treasure the Gaekwar was just where he was when Raghunath appeared in 1775, except that he had lost his share of Broach, which was now allotted to Sindhia, the Peshwa's ally.

On the death of Fateh Sinh in 1789, followed by that of his successor in 1793, Govind Rao was left without a rival. He was not, however, allowed to enjoy his dignities until he had paid enormous sums to the Poona Court, exacted on various pretexts; but a further attempt to dismember the State and to ruin the Gaekwars by insisting on the cession to the Peshwa of all the territories south of the Tapti, together with his share of the Surat revenues, was frustrated by the British, who peremptorily forbade such a cession, basing themselves upon the Treaty of Salbai in 1782. The British had by this time shown that it was unwise to court their displeasure, and they were evidently strong enough to make good their threat. The Peshwa obeyed.

The country continued to be in a disturbed state during the reign of Govind Rao—first by the rebellion of his own illegitimate son Kanhoji, aided by Malhar Rao the son of Khande Rao and later by the advent of one Shelukar, who was appointed Deputy-Governor of Gujerat by the new Peshwa Baji Rao, a man destined to bring the Maratha Empire to its inglorious close. Govind Rao triumphed over both these enemies—Ahmedabad fell—Shelukar was captured and imprisoned—and the chief result of all the tumult was that what was called the

Ahmedabad farm was leased to the Gaekwar for five years for a sum of 5 lakhs a year. Thus Ahmedabad finally fell to the Gaekwar and remained in his possession till its cession to the British in wholly different circumstances.

Govind Rao died in 1800. He had kept his hold on the State and had acquired the farm of Ahmedabad, but the extortions of Poona had been a continual drain on the treasury, and the wonder is that, what with these demands and the incessant wars, the State had managed to hold its own. Further trouble was in store for it, for the succession devolved upon another weak-minded Prince, who was utterly incapable of managing Baroda affairs in those warlike times. Dissensions again arose, this time between the Mayor of the Palace, the Dewan Raoji Appaji, and Kanhoji, the illegitimate son of Govind Rao already mentioned, who aspired to take the place of the Dewan. Chiefly by the help of Arab mercenaries, who were, as is not unusual with mercenaries, ready to take the side that paid them best, and who easily reverted to the one when the other was drained dry, first Kanhoji and then Raoji obtained the upper hand; but when the fortunes of Raoji began again to decline, both parties applied to the Bombay Government for help. The British, after some hesitation, consented to arbitrate, and Major Walker, who was sent to represent them, decided in favour of Raoji. But as Malhar Rao, who supported Kanhoji, refused to listen to reason, the arbitration was left to the decision of arms. The British and their allies prevailed. Malhar Rao surrendered and was allowed to live at Nadiad, and his principality of Kadi was annexed to the Gaekwar's dominions.

But this happy result was bought at a price. The Bombay Government were not disposed to intervene for nothing in the quarrels of the State. The Gaekwar had already ceded the Chorashi Pargana and his portion of the chauth of Surat as a sort of retaining-fee; he now con-

sented to pay the cost of the expedition and pledged his share of the Surat District as security. Various other concessions were made, but the Court of Directors disavowed the whole agreement, holding that it was in direct contravention of the Treaty of Salbai. Nevertheless the Peshwa, who was then hard pressed by Holkar and Sindhia, virtually placed himself in British hands; and by the Treaty of Bassein in December 1802 he resigned to the British his share in Surat, as well as territory of a revenue of 12½ lakhs, and he made the British the arbiters in dispute between his own Government and that of Baroda.

From all this welter of treaties and assignments, of alliances and counter-alliances, of shares and tributes and mortgages, three main facts emerge. The Gaekwar was recognized as the Ruler of Baroda State, which to some extent at any rate had taken definite shape; the power of the Peshwa was fast declining not only in Gujerat but everywhere else, and the British were rapidly gaining paramount influence both at Poona and at Baroda. The Treaty of Bassein on the last day of the year 1802 was, in fact, an admission of the weakness of Poona and of the strength of Bombay. The Peshwa was now virtually cut off from Gujerat; British ascendancy had taken his place. The British were established as protectors of the Gaekwar and they were appointed as negotiators between Poona and Baroda. The old exactions ceased, and moderate sums were fixed in commutation of the past dues of the Peshwas. Major Walker was appointed as Resident at the Court of the Gaekwar, and for many years the Resident became the virtual ruler of the State.

The story of the Definitive Treaty of 1805 will be told in its proper place in so far as it concerns the maintenance of a disciplined force for the protection of the Gaekwar territories. The cession of certain Districts in addition to

Kaira, Chorashi and Chikhli, as well as the subsequent surrender of the Ahmedabad farm, went a long way towards giving Baroda its present shape; but the Treaty also contained provisions whereby the foreign policy of the State was placed in British hands as well as all differences with the Peshwa, and it was also agreed that neither party would engage or employ the subjects of the other without each other's consent.

The Dewan of Baroda was at this time one Sitaram, who had not only proved his incompetence but had also behaved unscrupulously in respect of his master's money and in other ways. He had specially incurred the wrath of the Resident because of a rather curious incident. During the war between Holkar and Sindhia, Fateh Sinh, a member of the Gaekwar family, was captured by the former. Great efforts were made to obtain his release, but he was entrusted to the care of one Ahmed Khan, who with Holkar's army advanced to Songadh. There he managed to escape, and entered Gujerat with a small force of Pathans. He announced that he had promised Ahmed Khan half a lakh for his freedom and demanded also something for his Pathans. Colonel Walker suspected a conspiracy, and it transpired that Anand Rao's favourite wife had actually formed some plan to seize the Dewan and the Resident and to occupy the city of Baroda with the aid of the Pathans. The Resident was therefore induced to pay the ransom to Holkar and to deprive the Pathans of any excuse for remaining. He accordingly guaranteed the repayment of the money to be raised, and was told that it had been paid to Holkar. This was a lie. The money had not been paid; the hostages had somehow contrived to escape from Holkar to Ahmed Khan; and the Dewan Sitaram had appropriated or distributed the whole of the ransom money without the authority of the Maharaja.

Colonel Walker was naturally anxious to get rid of this

man, and eventually did so by the appointment of Babaji, the uncle of Sitaram. The escaped prisoner of Holkar, Fateh Sinh, became regent in 1806, and, in the conjunction of the Resident, the Minister, and the Regent, the State enjoyed a respite from its troubles. The affairs of Kathiawar demanded some attention. The fort at Dhari with the surrounding villages, as well as the small isolated village of Bhimkatta, were acquired, and the whole question of tribute was placed upon a more satisfactory system which did away with the necessity of annual expeditions of the old Mulukgiri type. This was effected by the exertions of Babaji, who acted under the advice but not as the subordinate of the Resident.

The Resident returned to Baroda and the worthless Sitaram was finally eliminated. But the trouble caused by an intriguing Minister and the farmer of the revenues did not immediately cease. Under Sayaji Rao II the system was abolished, only to be revived when 'the necessities, or the avarice of the head of the State, forced him once again to sell every kind of power to the farmer of revenue'. The final reform was undertaken by Sir T. Madhava Rao and was consummated by the present Maharaja.

Babaji Rao died in November 1810, exhorting his master to remember the value of the British alliance and all that it had done for him. In 1813 Gangadhar Shastri was Prime Minister of the State; he acquired considerable fame in Baroda as an excellent Minister, and is known to history by the tragic episode of his murder in Poona with the connivance of the Peshwa, which led eventually to the extinction of the Maratha power. Colonel Walker had already left Baroda. The State is ever grateful to this Englishman who had done so much to compose its differences and had worked towards the goal of peace, prosperity, and contentment within its borders. Much had yet to be done: the Colonel was, in fact, only the

pioneer who blazed the trail; but the old times of incessant wars and factions, of dramatic rise and tragic fall were over, and the new era may be dated from the regency of Fateh Sinh and the authority of Colonel Walker.

In 1811 the Baroda Government acquired the outlying district of Kodinar, which, with the exception of Okhamandal, completes the list of His Highness's possessions in Kathiawar. The district is not a very valuable acquisition. It lies in the extreme south of the peninsula, and is cut off from other Baroda possessions by the intervening State of Junagadh and the range of hills known as the Gir, where alone in all India lions are to be found. It has nothing to recommend it, and, as there are no railways, it is difficult to reach according to modern standards. In those days, however, the acquisition of territory had perhaps more value than these more practical times allow, and as there were no railways anywhere, the want of these facilities was not felt.

The British Government were now anxious to desist from further intervention in the affairs of Baroda, which, thanks to the first two Residents, had been able to pay off its debts to the Company and now seemed to be launched on a career of comparative prosperity. But they had reckoned without the restless Kanhoji, who, with the Rani Takhtabai, as persistent an intriguer as himself, conspired to overthrow the Government and to expel the British. The plot ended with the dramatic seizure of Kanhoji, who was conveyed in irons to Bombay, whence he was sent to Madras, and there ended his days.

But a more formidable question now appeared. The Treaty of 1805 had mentioned the claims of the Peshwa upon the Baroda Government; but these claims had not been settled, and an early settlement was all the more desirable because the lease of the Ahmedabad farm was running out and might not be renewed. In 1813 Gangadhar

Shastri set out for Poona to try and settle these claims, going 'most unwillingly though he possessed the British safe-conduct'. The Peshwa was very sensible that his power in Gujerat had gone, and he feared that a renewal of the Ahmedabad lease from time to time would eventually turn the place into a mere tributary province. The proceedings in Kathiawar were not to his liking, since they had been conducted without his sanction and had been concluded without his authority. The unsettled claims gave him the chance of regaining his lost prestige.

These events split Baroda into two parties, one led by the Regent and the Minister, who were loyal to the British alliance, and the other by the disappointed ex-Minister Sitaram and the irrepressible Takhatabai. For the time being the Government of Bombay held aloof, being anxious that the two powers concerned should settle matters in their own way. But this they (or rather the Resident at Poona) were unable to do for long. Baji Rao showed an evident desire to establish Sitaram at Baroda and an equally evident dislike of the Shastri. He, however, affected to consider the terms offered by the latter, changed his attitude to him from cold dislike to warm affection, and offered him his own sister-in-law in marriage. The Ahmedabad farm had, however, been granted to Trimbakji Daingle, and the approval of the Baroda Government to the proposed cession of territory in lieu of the unsettled claims was still delayed. On the 14th July 1815, Gangadhar Shastri was invited to some temple ceremony; he tried to excuse himself, but eventually went, in spite of the warning of his faithful friend, Bapu Mairal. On returning he was cut to pieces by four or five disguised men, to whom he was pointed out by Sitaram's agents.

We need not follow the immediate consequences of this dastardly outrage. The conduct of Fateh Singh the



Regent was at least so ambiguous as to cause serious concern to the Resident, whose sole anxiety was to see Baroda continuing in its new and prosperous career. The Regent refused to take action against Sitaram, who was confined in his own house under a guard of English troops. When Sitaram was on his way to Bombay and halted at Navsari, Fateh Sinh increased his allowances by 50 per cent. as a set-off against the harshness of the Bombay Government. Such proceedings as this led to strained relations with the Resident, who is said to have carried matters with a high hand, but the upshot was that the Government of Bombay judged it unwise to recede as yet from their position in Baroda.

Meanwhile Baji Rao rushed on his fate. By the Treaty of Poona (1817) the claims of the Peshwa upon the Gaekwar were settled in consideration of an annual payment of 4 lakhs; the Peshwa's tribute of Kathiawar was ceded to the British, and the farm of Ahmedabad was granted in perpetuity to His Highness. But Baji Rao chafed under the various humiliations he had received from the British, and he brooded over his wrongs. What followed is one of the landmarks of the history of the British in India. Baji Rao made an attack upon the Residency at Poona, was subsequently defeated at Kirkee, fled from Poona, and eventually surrendered to Sir John Malcolm. With him fell the Maratha Empire; what remained of it was but the shadow of a great name.

### III

Fateh Sinh the Regent died at the early age of 26 and was succeeded by Sayaji Rao II. The old half-witted Anand Rao lingered on for two years, and the ladies of the Palace, Radhabai the widow of Fateh Sinh, and the evergreen Takhatabai, cherished hopes of becoming Regent, with the added complication that Radhabai had been persuaded

to abandon a not very serious resolve to become Sati, by the permission to adopt a son. All, however, would not do, and the young Sayaji became Regent and afterwards Maharaja. He was a curious contrast to the feeble Anand Rao, and his character is thus summed up :

‘A man of exceptional vigour and self-assertion and of extraordinary tenacity of purpose: jealous of interference of anything savouring of dictation: capable of the most vindictive and protracted hatred towards those who opposed him or denied his authority: fond of power and fonder still of money: distrustful of his Ministers and yet unfortunately led by them into all kinds of crooked ways: physically timid and naturally fond of display, and yet driven by his strong will not to give way an inch in any direction, and to subordinate his expenditure to the steady accumulation of money. . . . It is probable that he of all past Gaekwars was regarded by his subjects with the most respect, for he was considerate to all, as long as he did not suspect them of thwarting him, and his private life was exceptionally moral.’<sup>1</sup>

Such was the Regent Sayaji Rao, who upon the death of Anand Rao in 1819 became Maharaja. His strong will—perhaps his natural inclination, fortified by real or fancied grievances—led him to oppose the Bombay Government throughout his reign, to the satisfaction of himself and the ultimate disadvantage of the State; but he was the most remarkable Prince that had arisen in the Gaekwar family since Damaji Rao, and his reign was one of the longest.

Various unpleasant incidents conspired to develop the Maharaja’s hostility to the Bombay Government: claims were refused; pressure was exerted to make him pay his guaranteed debts; the finances went from bad to worse, and the Maharaja declined the advice of the Resident; he

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda Gazetteer*, vol. i, p. 530.

was not allowed to appoint as his Minister the notorious Sitaram, who had been concerned in the murder of the Shastri, but who, in spite of all his villainy, seems to have been a favourite both with Fateh Sinh and with Sayaji Rao. Mountstuart Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, tried conciliation, but without perceptible result. His successor, Sir John Malcolm, resorted to harsher measures. As the Maharaja, in spite of remonstrances, still refused to pay his guaranteed debts, the Court of Directors authorized the Bombay Government either to assume the management of the whole State or to acquire some districts permanently. Bombay, however, did neither, but what they did was enough to exasperate the Maharaja. They sequestered temporarily certain territories of Baroda in order that by this means the bankers might receive what was owing to them under the guarantee of the British. But strongly as the Maharaja resented this under the impression that these guarantees actually prevented him from paying off his debts and threatened him with loss of territory, he was moved to further wrath by the protection which the British gave to Vithal Rao Devaji, an ex-Minister, whom the Maharaja looked upon as a traitor. Not only did the Bombay Government insist upon granting this man a pension, but they confirmed him in his command of 110 horse, and recognized the adoption of a son whom the Maharaja had refused to acknowledge. This was, to say the least, indiscreet, and was condemned by Malcolm's successor, Lord Clare. The object of thus provoking the already incensed Prince by espousing the cause of an individual subject is not apparent, and Sir John would have been better advised to follow the example of Elphinstone, who had left Vithal Rao to be dealt with as the Maharaja thought fit. It was, after all, no concern of the British.

Lord Clare's policy of extreme conciliation was the

exact reverse of his predecessor's, and fared perhaps even worse. The Chronicle says:

'The period between Lord Clare's and Sir James Carnac's visit is the darkest in the reign of Sayaji Rao: terror reigned along the border and murders became common: whole villages were plundered and burnt by the Koli and Bhil subjects of the Gaekwar: the contingent force was allowed to deteriorate for political purposes: Veniram ("The worthless Minister and favourite") and his master relentlessly attacked the bankers and others who held British guarantees; the remonstrances of the Agent, of the Government of Bombay, and of the supreme Government were set at naught.'<sup>1</sup>

It is unnecessary to follow Sayaji Rao through his interminable disputes with the Bombay Government. Veniram was dismissed under pressure, but corruption and intrigue now took the place of open opposition. Certainly the historian is justified in claiming that the greater part of the reign was one long struggle with the British Government.

#### IV

Although Sayaji Rao II had thus resisted every effort of the Bombay Government to see that the administration of Baroda was well conducted, it is difficult to say what figure he would have cut if he had been allowed to go his own way without such constant interference. He does not seem to have been a good judge of men, and the annals are unsparing in criticism of his Minister; on the other hand, the Bombay Government, perhaps driven to their wits' end, hardly went the right way to obtain what they wanted. The extreme harshness of Sir John Malcolm served to irritate a strong nature; the extreme leniency of Lord Clare seems to have induced the belief that nothing was required at all and that the State could go

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda Gazetteer*, vol. i, p. 551.

its own way of its own accord. The constant interference was not only galling to a proud Prince, but also suggested that the whole responsibility lay with the Bombay Government, and if that was in abeyance no attempt to govern on right lines need be made. The Maharaja has been accused of parsimony; we have the testimony of Bishop Heber that the 'Gaekwar is said to be a man of talent who governs his State himself, the Ministers having very little weight with him, and governs it well and vigorously. His error is too great a fondness for money, but, as he found his State involved in debt, even this seems excusable.' There is certainly a tendency to regard any attempt to deal prudently with money as parsimony, as there is an equal tendency to regard a liberal generosity as extravagance. It may well be that Sayaji Rao thus suffered by contrast with his predecessors. We hear but little of his general administration; the annals are centred upon his disputes, with a side glance upon the unsettled state of his eastern borders. Charity demands that his epitaph be written in the words of the good Bishop.

He died in 1847, and was succeeded by his son Ganpat Rao Gaekwar, who was reported to be weak in character and a strong contrast to his forceful father. He seems to have been poorly educated and very susceptible to influence, which, fortunately, in the person of Captain French, was exercised for good. The building of roads was undertaken; infanticide was forbidden; the sale of children, which had been common, was prohibited, and advances were made towards introducing vaccination. Reforms so entirely in consonance with British ideas betray the dominant influence of the Resident, which was brought to bear upon a complaisant and unassertive character. His Minister, moreover, was not a man approved by the Resident, and as, for some reason, he seems to have been a favourite with the Maharaja, the question

of his dismissal seems to have been the only point of acute difference between them. To the first demand made upon him the Maharaja gave a stout refusal, but he afterwards dismissed the Minister, though he would not appoint any one to succeed him.

The death of Maharaja Ganpat Rao brings us down to a period which is within the orbit of our main narrative. We have briefly traced the Baroda State from the rise of Pilaji Rao, with his stronghold at Songadh and the somewhat precarious founding of a kingdom by Damaji Rao, to its established position as an Indian State with a hereditary succession. It has been shown how in the earlier times the infant kingdom strove to maintain itself against the Musalmans, and against the Marathas hailing from Satara and Poona; how it resisted the Peshwa Government, to which, however, it was obliged to own some kind of subordination; how on the fall of the Peshwa Government the British stepped into its place and wielded both influence and authority in Baroda State; and how the State gradually emerged from a condition of interminable confusion and anarchy into one of comparative peace and order. The division of the State into the present scattered territories has been explained by the interposition of the British, first at Surat and later at Ahmedabad and in Kathiawar, by the downright acquisition of some territories and the recognition of others as tributaries. The State had now been set on the path of modern reform and progress, which, if we except the lamentable lapse between the years 1870-5, it has since followed. Great, however, as is the contrast between the days of Damaji Rao and of the last Maharaja worthy of the name, Khande Rao, it was only a beginning that had been made. The minority administration of 1875-81 found plenty to do and many abuses to reform, and it was only in the reign of Maharaja Sayaji Rao III, the subject of this memoir, that the State

began to progress upon well-ordered and systematic lines, that a settled and continuous policy was followed, and reforms were introduced which have given Baroda a name and reputation not only among Indian States but throughout India.

## V

A word remains to be said about the tributaries. Some allusion has already been made to the Mulukgiri system, and its origin can best be described in the words of the Chronicle:

‘For many years previous to the first invasion of the Marathas, the Mussalmans, unable to bring the Kathiawar Chiefs under complete subjugation owing as much to the physical configuration of the peninsula as to the warlike character of its inhabitants, were in the habit of extracting tributes from them by constantly recurring military demonstrations which came to be known by the name of Mulukgiri.’<sup>1</sup>

This system was adopted and developed by the Marathas. At first it seems to have been nothing but a series of raids into countries which neither of these two great powers thought it worth while to annex and administer, and while it was the object of the invaders to collect as much as they could, it was equally the object of the victims to pay as little as possible and to resist extraordinary exactions. By degrees, however, experience evolved certain principles. It began to be seen that the sooner the invading army could get away the sooner it could be disbanded, and that the extra amount which coercion could squeeze out of the unwilling chiefs was more than swallowed up by the expenses of maintaining the troops. The victims also realized that it was to their interest to get rid of the unwelcome visitors as soon as possible, and

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda Gazetteer*, vol. i, p. 662.

that by a peaceful settlement of claims much unnecessary damage and hardship could be avoided. It therefore became the practice to negotiate before proceeding to violence. The vakil or agent of the Chief would meet the army on its approach and try to arrive at a settlement, which if effected was confirmed by a bond designed as security against future depredations by the one party, and as an earnest of good faith by the other. But the exactions did not stop with the tribute proper. There were many other demands to be satisfied, such as perquisites of the Commander and the servants, fees to the State officers accompanying the army, and the maintenance of men left in the villages as the army passed through, as an earnest that they would not be molested further.

This system, though possibly suited to time and place, was of course very irregular. No one knew what he had to pay until either the composition was made or the demands were announced. The progresses of the armies were made at irregular intervals, and the extra demands just mentioned were of a very variable and elastic nature. Moreover, the system began to be copied by the petty chiefs themselves against one another, and in certain States by the chief against his own tenants, from whom he collected the revenue more by force of arms than by virtue of any right to a portion of the produce.

When Gujerat was divided between the Peshwa and Damaji Rao, the division of the right to tribute in Kathiawar also came under consideration and was eventually divided in like manner. The Peshwa at first collected his own share by means of his own officers, but as these rights were attached to the Ahmedabad District, which proved unequal to the task of collection, they were farmed out to the Gaekwar for a fixed sum, and when later the whole of Ahmedabad was farmed to the Gaekwar, these rights went with it. With the advent of the British and of



Colonel Walker a change was made. The Resident, with infinite labour, and after personal discussion with the various chiefs, arrived at a settlement of the tribute. He had undertaken no light task, for in addition to the ordinary difficulties of examining documents and of deciding claims, he had to contend with the 'chimerical or excessive expectations of the lords of the soil for whom the utmost that could be done in general was merely to provide for their security in future', and also 'to moderate the demands of the Baroda Government' when these appeared extortionate. He had further to disabuse the people of a firm belief that the British intended to oust the Gaekwar, upon which belief many of them had offered assistance. By degrees the task was accomplished; the tributes were fixed; the settlement was accepted by the Baroda Government and the tributaries, and was embodied in nine articles; and finally the British gave their guarantee to the chiefs on condition that they observed the terms of the settlement and remained submissive to the Gaekwar.

Colonel Walker had, however, overlooked one important point. The Mulukgiri revenues, as already mentioned, belonged as much to the Peshwa as to the Baroda Government; the share of Poona had only been farmed for the sake of convenience. The Peshwa naturally objected that he had not been consulted, and it was largely owing to the resentment in this matter that the lease of the farm of Ahmedabad was refused to Baroda in 1814. All attempts by Elphinstone to induce the Peshwa to allow the Gaekwar to collect his revenues for him failed, and in the end the Bombay Government themselves undertook the task, which proved to be a difficult one. But it did not last long. Two years afterwards the crash had come and Baji Rao was a prisoner in the hands of the British. In the reign of Sayaji Rao II, the collection of the entire tributes was

entrusted to the British; the Gaekwar was to receive a fixed sum from the tributary chiefs in Kathiawar and, with the exception of those districts in which he had acquired territorial rights, he was to have no further concern with the Kathiawar Peninsula. In making this arrangement the Bombay Government was careful to uphold the rights of the Gaekwar: 'Care must be taken in all transactions . . . with the tributaries to maintain the Gaekwar's nominal superiority, and the remembrance that his rights still exist no less than to prevent any interference by his officers contrary to the present agreement.' That is the position to-day.

In Gujerat varying circumstances have brought about much the same result, but under different conditions. The two territories, called for administrative purposes the Mahi Kantha and the Rewa Kantha, are each under a British Political Agent. In Mahi Kantha the interlacing of British and Gaekwar territories in wild and lawless country suggested the desirability of placing the whole under one authority, and that could only be the British. By an agreement of the 3rd April 1820 this scheme was brought into operation. The Gaekwar undertook to send no more troops into Kathiawar or the Mahi Kantha, and the British Government agreed to collect his tribute for him free of expense; the cost of coercing a recalcitrant Chief was to be recovered from the Chief himself. In similar fashion the Agency of Palanpur was created, and though the Rewa Kantha—which from its name should comprise only the country on the banks of the Narbada river, but which for administrative reasons actually includes more—had not given trouble, so that Mulukgiri expeditions had ceased there, the British Government desired to establish an Agency there also, as it had done in Mahi Kantha. To this Maharaja Sayaji Rao II and his Minister Vithal Rao Devaji agreed, but in order to avoid

future misunderstandings the Maharaja drew up a Memorandum known as the Kalambandi of 1825. It was accepted by the Bombay Government and is still in force. The total yield of the Mulukgiri expeditions, now reduced to regular settlements, is about Rs. 630,000.

## *Chapter One*

### THE DEPOSITION OF MALHAR RAO

THE creation of the modern Baroda State is, so far as that may be, the work of one man. It is true that the enormous task of clearing away all the accumulated debris of incompetence, corruption, dishonesty, injustice, and extravagance which were the legacy left by the last occupant of the throne, had been successfully performed by a most able and distinguished Indian, as the preparation of the Maharaja for his high office had been the work of a devoted Englishman. The name of Raja Sir T. Madhav Rao must ever be conspicuous in the annals of Baroda as the cleanser of the Augean stables; and the name of Mr. F. A. H. Elliot will be equally honoured as the man who first set the Maharaja on the path which he has ever since followed. These two men laid the foundations of an era of prosperity never before known in Baroda, and to them and to a long line of carefully chosen Ministers the Maharaja owes a debt of gratitude which he would be the first to acknowledge.

And yet the construction of the modern Baroda is in the main the Maharaja's own work. It has been his pre-occupation, and more than that, for fifty years. Amid his distractions of wide reading and foreign travel, of court ceremonials and social obligations, he has never let go the cardinal idea that his life belongs primarily to the State. It might so easily have been different. Brought as he was, an unlettered boy living in obscurity in an obscure village, to a throne where he was the master of absolute power and of what must have seemed unlimited wealth, living for only six years in an atmosphere of law and order, of high ideals and of intensive study, and exposed soon after to the temptations of traditions and customs that had become established during the previous half-century, he might so

easily have stepped back into the old bad ways. There were, we may readily imagine, those to whom a weakening of purpose or a slackening of moral fibre during those critical years would have been a signal for a whisper, an insinuation, a suggestion which adroitly followed up might have led to incalculable disaster. The Maharaja owes much to the loving care not only of his tutor but also of the cultivated lady who adopted him and who had the good sense to leave him as far as she could to the influence of his preceptors. But most of all he owes to himself. He has been the architect of his own fortunes and if he shares with us all the imperfections of humanity he can look back upon a great career, a career of which any one of us might well be proud.

## II

For many years Baroda State had been upon the downward path. The Maharaja Khande Rao, who reigned from 1856 to 1870, had not been a bad ruler. He is described as a 'man of bodily and mental energy, sometimes self-willed, very shrewd and observant and takes a large share in the administration, has a mind open to kindly impressions and is actuated by generous impulses'.<sup>1</sup> He was not unmindful of the needs of the State, but was diverted from his higher purpose by an inordinate love of display and magnificence. The typical instance and perhaps the key to the character of the man was his grandiose conception of a water-supply for Baroda City from the far-distant Narbada, the money for which when the scheme proved impracticable was diverted to the building of palaces and the acquisition of jewels. Maharaja Khande Rao has been compared to the English Henry VIII, but he does not seem to have had the real ability of that great king, and if we are seeking for Plutarchian parallels a juster one would seem to be the

<sup>1</sup> Resident writing in 1868. *Baroda Gazetteer*, vol. i, p. 585.

Khedive Ismail II of Egypt, whose extraordinary love of magnificence led his country into financial disaster and a British occupation which lasted for nearly fifty years. Nor was he fortunate in the choice of his Ministers. The last and worst of them, Bhau Shinde, is described as an 'ignorant, low fellow whose one merit lay in his power of amusing the Maharaja'.<sup>1</sup> He was convicted in 1869 of attempting to bribe the Assistant Resident, and seems to have been largely instrumental in the confinement at Padra of the Maharaja's brother Malhar Rao for conspiracy against Khande Rao. For this transaction he was to pay a terrible price when Malhar Rao succeeded his brother.

Maharaja Khande Rao died suddenly in November 1870. In his earlier years he had tried to serve the State well, but the instability of his character was such that he achieved little that was lasting. As the years went on he yielded more and more to his passion for the chase and to his love of magnificent display. He was perhaps happy in the opportunity of his death, for he left behind him a pleasant memory—at any rate amongst those who judged by the surface and were unable to perceive the internal diseases of the State. In the anxious time of the Mutiny he had stood by the British, and the gratitude which they showed for this loyalty was destined to bear lasting fruit.<sup>2</sup>

As soon as he died the prisoner of Padra ascended the throne of Baroda as the next heir. But complete recognition was deferred until the sex of the unborn child of Maharaja Khande Rao's queen was determined. In July 1871 a girl was born: Maharaja Malhar Rao was secure and the storm burst. All those who had faithfully served Khande Rao were fit objects of his brother's vengeance. Most, if not all, were dismissed; many were left completely penniless. The worthless Bhau Shinde was thrown into

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 593.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 594, &c.

prison, not for the misdeeds which might have deserved such punishment but because of his share in the imprisonment of the Maharaja. By 1873 things had come to an intolerable pass. The Bombay Government had long been anxious at the turn affairs were taking in Baroda, and in March 1873 they decided to replace the somewhat too easy-going Colonel Barr by the more energetic Colonel Phayre as Resident at the Court of Baroda. Colonel Phayre soon got to work. In letter after letter he reported that the course of maladministration could go no further, and pressed for interference. The Bombay Government supported him. The Government of India, not unaware of the gravity of the step, appointed a Commission and on 18th October 1873 nominated to it Colonel Richard Meade, Mr. E. W. Ravenscroft, Moomtaz-ud-doulah, Nawab Faiz Ali Khan Bahadur, C.S.I., and Colonel Etheridge, C.S.I.

Into the details of their report we need not follow them. The results were forcibly summed up in a minute by a member of the Bombay Government dated 1st March 1874:

‘A people arbitrarily taxed at the pleasure of a selfish man, surrounded by courtiers aware of the uncertain tenure of their position, and eager to amass riches while they have the opportunity; the right to levy the taxes farmed out to whoever pays the heaviest bribes (for the Nazarana levied can be called by no other name) and who in return obtains not only fiscal but civil and criminal jurisdiction also, but in his turn is exposed to be deprived of his purchased right without warning by another paying a heavier bribe; a custom, and excused by the Commission on the ground that it is a well-known custom, of levying the revenue, not by any reasonable process of law but by the bodily torture of the cultivators of the soil; justice almost openly administered by ignorant and corrupt tribunals by means of torture . . . and capable when called to account of falsifying records and shameless perversion of the truth; old

retainers of the State and relatives and trusted advisers of former rulers cast ruthlessly on the world without the means of gaining their livelihood; petty chiefs roused to desperation by new exactions; debts due to bankers to whom the State has been under deep obligations repudiated and their private property confiscated without a shadow of excuse, they themselves and the members of their families being kept prisoners without even the semblance of a trial; tradesmen offering jewels for sale simply swindled out of their fair value; women, the wives and daughters of respectable men, seized in open day in the capital of the kingdom, ordered into domestic slavery in the Gaekwar's palace by himself personally, sometimes dishonoured by attendants and fearing to come forward to tell the story of their shame before the world.<sup>1</sup>

The picture is drawn in more lurid colours than those which the Commission itself employed. Yet even if things were not quite so bad as that—and there were contemporaries who thought they were even worse—there was here more than enough to justify the appointment of the Commission, and the decision of the Government of India after such a piling of Pelion upon Ossa comes upon us as somewhat of an anticlimax. The Gaekwar was given a last chance. He was to be free to choose his own Ministers and was urged to put the Baroda house in order; he was told to lean for advice on the Resident, to whom full instructions had been given as to the direction in which reforms were desired. The advice was in effect a command, since it was accompanied by a threat that if these reforms were not effected by the end of December 1875 the inevitable result would be deposition.

### III

This was in July 1874, but the allotted time was rudely broken into. Colonel Phayre, having satisfied himself that the state of Baroda affairs was thoroughly bad, and

<sup>1</sup> Rogers, *East India (Baroda)*, i. 79.



having been vindicated by the Commission, evidently distrusted the Maharaja and all his works and conceived a dislike for him almost amounting to hatred. His handling of the situation was so masterful and imperious that the Government of India were seriously displeased, and after the receipt of a Kharita<sup>1</sup> from the Gaekwar begging in moderate terms<sup>2</sup> that Colonel Phayre might be removed, were actually in correspondence with the Secretary of State on the subject when a startling event occurred. On the 9th November an attempt was made to poison the Resident by means of arsenic administered in some fruit juice which he was in the habit of drinking after his morning walk. Police inquiries established a strong *prima facie* case of complicity and instigation by the Maharaja. He was arrested; the Government of the State was temporarily assumed by the British; another Commission was appointed consisting of three Englishmen and three Indians (two of them Princes) with Sir R. Couch, Chief Justice of Bengal, as President, and a regular State trial was held. The result was inconclusive. The Englishmen held the Maharaja guilty: the Indians regarded the case as not proven. The Government of India, coming to their own independent conclusion, felt obliged to concur with the English Commissioners, but Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State, thought it inexpedient to lay any stress upon a verdict which, though it did not proceed upon racial lines, was nevertheless divided racially. Maharaja Malhar Rao had, however, seriously compromised himself in other ways. Though he had given many assurances of amendment, and had appointed Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, a Parsi gentleman who afterwards became famous for various reasons both in England and

<sup>1</sup> So called from the embroidered bag in which the document was sent.

<sup>2</sup> Government of India to Secretary of State; *East India Papers (Baroda)*, iv, p. 104.

in India, he had greatly hampered the administration by retaining in power side by side with the reforming Ministers the old bad set who owed their position to favouritism and to their personal influence with the Maharaja. Whether this was the primary cause or whether it was true, as Colonel Phayre was never tired of reporting, that Mr. Dadabhai had not the capacity or the experience necessary to undertake the Herculean task of reforming Baroda, hardly anything of value was done to initiate any reforms, and the chief cause for the failure undoubtedly lay in the character of the Maharaja himself. In May 1874 he had married Lakshmi Bai, his kept mistress and a person of uncertain antecedents, to the great scandal not only of his own subjects but of all decent Marathas within and without the State. The Government of India used very moderate language in describing the marriage as 'in every point of view highly improper and discreditable to Malhar Rao'. He had further persecuted Rukma Bai, the youngest widow of Khande Rao Gaekwar, and though the Government of India at first thought it would meet the case if the Resident merely advised Malhar Rao to provide for her away from the Palace, subsequent inquiry gave a more serious complexion to her complaints. He had further quarrelled with his Sardars; by refusing their just pay he was fast driving the Sindhis and Arabs in his service into open revolt. The oppression of the cultivators, who are not only the largest class in the State but the class upon which it mainly depends for its revenue, continued without redress and abatement. The finances were in great disorder. Sir Lewis Pelly, who was appointed to succeed Colonel Phayre with the title of Agent to the Governor-General, found that while the revenue was 94 lakhs the expenditure in the past year had been no less than 171 lakhs, of which 70 went to the gratification of favourites and courtesans and to the repairing of palaces and other

personal extravagances of the Maharaja. Only Rs. 2,000 were found in the State Treasury, while 40 lakhs were discovered in two locked boxes in the palace, of which some of the women behind the purdah held the keys.<sup>1</sup> The murder of the late Minister Bhau Shinde by poison, and the still more atrocious murder of a man named Govind Naik by slow torture, the first probably and the second almost certainly with the connivance, if not under the direct orders, of the Maharaja, put the seal upon this long catalogue of misrule and oppression. Lord Salisbury, in approving the final act of the tragedy, spoke of the Maharaja as a 'ruler whose incurable vices had been established by a full experience'. Reluctant as the British Government had been to resort to so drastic a step as the deposition of an Indian Prince—and one who stood so high in the princely order as the Maharaja Gaekwar—there was a limit to their forbearance. Lord Salisbury says :

'Incorrigible misrule is of itself a sufficient disqualification for sovereign power. Her Majesty's Government have willingly accepted the opportunity of recognizing in a conspicuous case the paramount obligation which lies upon them of protecting the people of India from oppression.'<sup>2</sup>

The fateful proclamation is dated the 19th April 1875. It expressly disclaims any reliance upon the poisoning case and its divided verdict. It bases the decision upon

'all the circumstances relating to the affairs of Baroda from the accession of His Highness Malhar Rao Gaekwar to the present time, his notorious misconduct, his gross misgovernment of the State, and his evident incapacity to carry into effect the necessary reforms.'<sup>3</sup>

Malhar Rao is accordingly declared 'deposed from the Sovereignty of Baroda State' and 'he and his issues are

<sup>1</sup> Sir L. Pelly, *East India Papers (Baroda)*, vi, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Dispatch No. 69, dated 3.6.1825, from the Secretary of State to the Governor-General in Council.

<sup>3</sup> *East India Papers (Baroda)*, v, p. 32.

precluded from all rights, honours and privileges thereto appertaining'.<sup>1</sup> This reference to issue was expressly intended to debar the son of Lakshmi Bai, who was born some four or five months after the marriage. Although it appeared that a child conceived before wedlock might be recognized if born after legal marriage, the Government of India decided that it could not be to the interests of the State to recognize the issue of an improper and unsuitable marriage, in which the bride was of questionable character and doubtful caste. The boy eventually accompanied his father into exile and disappears from history. But the next article of the Proclamation was one which directly concerns the subject of this book and was destined to have a remarkable effect upon the future of Baroda :

'Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen,' it ran, 'in re-establishing a Native Administration in the Baroda State, being desirous to mark her sense of the loyal services of His Highness Khande Rao Gaekwar in 1857, has been pleased to accede to the request of his widow, Her Highness Jamna Bai, that she may be allowed to adopt some member of the Gaekwar House whom the Government of India may select as the most suitable person upon whom to confer the sovereignty of the Baroda State.'<sup>2</sup>

Nobody then knew who that person was to be. It would certainly have been an advantage if the Sardars and great officers of the State could have been immediately presented with their future ruler. On the other hand, no name was ready and, as events proved, no boy could be offered to Her Highness without inquiry into the merits of the various claims. The deposition could not safely be delayed. Rumours were certain to get about; excitement, discontent, uncertainty were likely to follow; Malhar Rao if left in Baroda would still be a potential

<sup>1</sup> *East India Papers (Baroda, No. 5)*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

centre for mischief. These considerations won the day. With the single exception of the candidate for adoption all was ready, and accordingly on the 22nd April Malhar Rao left Baroda for ever.

#### IV

But even bad kings have their followers; nor are these necessarily the worthless men who have grown fat by pandering to the luxury or the vice of their master. Loyalty to a dynasty would seem to be instinctive. However tyrannical a ruler may be, however notorious his misconduct, there will always be found some who sympathize with the fallen ruler. Malhar Rao was safely out of the way. The Sardars, to whom Sir Richard Meade, who had succeeded Sir Lewis Pelly, had immediately explained matters, were acquiescent. But on 28th April a disturbance took place: the merchants shut their shops, declaring that where there was no Gaekwar there could be no trade; two British officers were roughly handled; a clique of the soldiery attempted to seat the son of Malhar Rao on the throne. A mixed detachment was sent to Baroda City, and the riot was quickly ended.

In all that led up to the deposition, Colonel Phayre, the Resident, had taken a conspicuous part. He had had a rude awakening almost on the day of his arrival, when certain men were flogged in the streets of Baroda so severely that at least one died of the punishment. From that time onwards he seems to have conceived a dislike of the Maharaja which grew into positive hatred, and a distrust of all his advisors which hardened into a belief that no good thing could come out of Baroda. He is almost as severe upon Dadabhai Naoroji as he is upon the Maharaja. He told the latter frankly that he had better dismiss his Minister, a proceeding which promptly drew down upon him a severe rebuke from the Government of Bom-

bay, whose policy it was to leave Malhar Rao free to effect his own reforms with his own chosen instruments. It was this evident hostility which prompted Malhar Rao to ask for his removal, and it was rather his general attitude towards the Durbar than any particular occasion which induced the Government of India, much to the chagrin of the Bombay Government, to send Sir Lewis Pelly in his place. Yet, after all, Colonel Phayre proved to be right. His early strictures upon the Durbar had resulted in the Commission which vindicated him completely, and the long series of letters which he wrote in the autumn of 1874 had the support of Sir Lewis Pelly, who submitted his 'solemn recommendation that the Gaekwar State be saved by the deposal from power of its Ruler'. Here is what Sir Lewis Pelly says :

'My own observation here has assured me that the cultivating classes are discontented to an unusual degree, and were until recently in a state of almost passive resistance to the collection of the revenue. Again the nobles were until my recent interview with them in combination against the authority of His Highness. Until purged by the administration of Mr. Dadabhai the criminal and civil administration of justice was notoriously venal and corrupt. The general voice of the community was loud in condemnation of His Highness' extravagant expenditure on himself, his favourites and his palaces.' <sup>1</sup>

Baroda had acquired an evil reputation for bad neighbourhood and as the asylum of bad characters and intriguers. But though Colonel Phayre was justified and though the Government of India cast no imputation upon his evident sincerity of purpose, it was perhaps fortunate that the Secretary of State was not called upon to act upon the testimony of one who had so plainly shown his hostility to the Durbar. Just as Lord Salisbury's decision to ignore the poisoning case, in spite of the declared opinion of the

<sup>1</sup> Sir L. Pelly to the Government of India, *East India Papers (Baroda)*, vi, p. 42.

Government of India, was dictated by political considerations, so for the same reason it was well that the deposition itself was founded mainly on the report of Sir Richard Meade's Commission of 1873 and upon the unbiased opinion of Sir Lewis Pelly, who had only been some five months in Baroda when the crash came.

## V

And so the curtain went down upon the drama. When it rose again Sir T. Madhav Rao had taken charge as Dewan-Regent and Sir Richard Meade was established in Baroda, this time as the Agent to the Governor-General and the friendly adviser of the new administration. The old bad days of intrigue and oppression and of everlasting friction between Durbar and Residency were over; a new day had dawned, full of promise for the State, and henceforward there was nothing to disturb the harmony that existed from the first between the Regent and the Resident.

Sir T. Madhav Rao was a remarkable man. He came of that Maratha stock which in the heyday of the great Peshwas had established itself far to the south in Tanjore. He was educated in Madras and, like many eminent Indians, such as Gokhale, Tilak, and the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, saw early service as an educationist. Later on he was chosen to be the Dewan of Travancore, where he remained for fourteen years, and one may hazard the conjecture that that State, reputed to be one of the best governed in India, still bears the impress of his personality. In 1873 he became Dewan to the Maharaja Holkar of Indore, who earned the gratitude of the Government of India and the lasting thanks of Baroda State by consenting to allow him to take up the difficult task of reforming the administration of Baroda. Affairs in Baroda were very critical. An unwise administrator, jealous of his prerogatives and impatient of advice and criticism, an imperious

Resident after the pattern of Colonel Phayre, sincerely anxious to do his duty and for that very reason prone to minute and harassing interference with internal affairs, might have retarded, if not paralysed, the efforts to restore harmony and good government. The Government of India, fortunate in their choice of Madhav Rao, were equally fortunate in their choice of the British representatives. Sir Lewis Pelly was obliged by ill health to leave Baroda after a stay of barely five months. To Sir Richard Meade, who was no stranger to Baroda affairs, fell the task of keeping order during the delicate days succeeding the Proclamation of deposition; the difficult duty of advising the Maharani Jamna Bai on the choice of the boy she was to adopt—a duty, however, made less difficult by the wise perspicacity of the lady herself; and the inauguration, in constant consultation with the Minister, of the new order of things. Six years later the young Maharaja spoke of Meade thus affectionately :

‘We in Baroda remember Sir Richard Meade as the founder of the existing new order of public affairs here. We have been moving on the broad lines laid down by him and we feel we have been moving towards justice, security, prosperity, and honour.’<sup>1</sup>

He left Baroda in November 1875, bearing with him the good wishes of the Minister, the Maharani, and, last but not least, of the Maharaja.

He was succeeded by Mr. P. S. Melvill, who was also no stranger to Baroda, having served on the poisoning case Commission. The harmonious relations with the Minister continued undisturbed, and it was mainly through the cordial co-operation of these able men of good will that the young Maharaja was able to succeed to a dominion which, in his own words, was ‘moving towards justice, security, prosperity, and honour’. But it is

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Richard Meade*, by T. H. Thornton, p. 253.



to the lasting honour of His Highness that he himself never swerved from that path. Mistakes there have been and disappointments—moments of irritation and moments of depression—but the Government of India and Baroda State have no cause to regret that when the fateful decision had to be taken the choice fell where it did.

## VI

The task of reconstruction was not made any easier by the scattered nature of the Baroda dominions. The principal part of the State consists of three large islands set in the sea of the British province of Gujerat—with this important difference, that while the restless sea is the source of the surest protection to the true island, the restless land is the source of endless complications to the metaphorical island. There were no railways; roads properly so called did not, and for that matter do not now, exist within the Baroda territories. To reach a discontented populace, to supervise a questionable staff, to negotiate with turbulent Thakores, you had to pass through a wide belt of British territory into the district of Kadi to the north, and through another wide belt, crossing the rivers Narbada and Tapti *en route*, into Navsari in the south. Far away in Kathiawar is a veritable archipelago of Baroda territory with Amreli as the capital, surrounded on all sides by various small States, each naturally eager for its own advancement and jealous of its rights and privileges, while in the northern angle of the Kathiawar peninsula is Okhamandal, home of the erstwhile pirates known as Vaghers, a desolate, treeless, wind-swept country, yet not without a certain wild charm, and dear to all Hindus as the earthly kingdom of Sri Krishna, in whose honour, bent by the obsequious wind, all the trees bow themselves as they did to Orpheus' lute, in the direction of the great temple. A fertile country is Gujerat, reputed to be the

Garden of India, with what justification one does not exactly know, but rich especially in cotton. At the time of the American Civil War the peasantry waxed fat upon inflated prices, and the State took care to share in the profits. It was one of the grievances that when prices again fell to the normal, the State did not relax its demands, which in the altered state of things were crushing to agriculture. Kathiawar, on the contrary, is a treeless plain with a shallow depth of soil; for the most part flat as the sea, and exposed to capricious variations of the monsoon. Here as elsewhere in the Raj a hard-working and infinitely patient peasantry, if also ignorant and unthrifty, lead their humble lives, content with little and asking for no extravagant favours; ready to pay their just quota to the exchequer, and never murmuring until goaded to exasperation by manifest injustice and the selfish greed of those who suck their life-blood for the gratification of their own extravagant pleasures. With the exception of Baroda City there was and is no town in the State which could be called a town in the English sense. A few places there are which can boast of a population of from ten to twenty thousand, but even these are for the most part mere market centres which, in spite of a street or two of shops, the presence of officials and merchants, and the residential quarters of the well-to-do, have nevertheless not entirely put off their rural complexion. The capital named Baroda or more properly Vadodhra, the womb of the banyan tree,<sup>1</sup> is a place of about 100,000 inhabitants. Driving now through broad and well-kept streets, where police direct the traffic in the approved style, past the imposing blocks of the High School and the College, past the public park and the splendid hospital, one of the most efficient

<sup>1</sup> The meaning is uncertain. The idea, according to an Indian authority, is that Baroda was the soil from which the groves of banyans sprang. The place was originally called Vatpur, village or town of the banyan, and the present name seems to be a poetical variant.

institutions in the State, past the large pile of the public offices, and thence into the twin town divided by the picturesque tank of the Sursagar and the Law Courts, and so into the older city flanked at the further end by the clock-tower known locally as the Mandvi, it is difficult to picture what it must have looked like before the present Maharaja took it in hand. Sir Richard Meade was disappointed with it. 'Baroda is a most uninteresting place and has nothing to recommend it,'<sup>1</sup> is his summary judgement. Half a century earlier Bishop Heber found the city 'large and populous, with tolerably wide streets and very high houses, at least for India, chiefly built of wood which I had not seen for a long time, with tiled sloping roofs and *rows* along the streets, something like those of Chester. . . . There are some tolerable pagodas but no other building which can be admired. The streets are dirty, with many swine running up and down, and no signs of wealth, though as I was told there was a good deal of its reality both among the bankers and principal tradesmen.' The good Bishop seems to have been impressed by 'two very fine hunting tygers in silver chains' which he met in the road and by a rhinoceros which a mahout was riding. The palace was not impressive. 'A large shabby building close to the street, four stories high, with wooden galleries projecting over each other.' The interior was in conformity with this unpleasing exterior. The Bishop was received by the Maharaja 'in a long narrow room, approached by a very mean and steep staircase'. The Maharaja's private study was 'a little hot room up sundry pair of stairs with a raised sofa, a punkah and other articles of European comfort, as well as two large mirrors, a print of Buonaparte and another of the Duke of Wellington'.<sup>2</sup> This was in March 1825. On the other

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Richard Meade*, by T. H. Thornton, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> Heber's *Narrative*, vol. iii, pp. 4 and 10.

hand, Cairne thought the place 'singularly picturesque, lined with fine houses belonging to merchants, bankers, and nobles, many of the façades being of fairly carved teak wood', though the remoter parts of the town were, as they still to some extent are, 'a labyrinth of narrow and crooked alleys'.<sup>1</sup>

The extant descriptions of old Baroda suggest that there was then nothing striking about the city. They are more eloquent in their silence than in their descriptions. When the Prince of Wales visited Baroda at the end of 1875 the official narrator of the tour, Dr. Russell, has nothing better to say than this :

'The city is curious. There are drains covered with wood along each side and some idea of a path for foot passengers but there is no pavement'—a very European touch, that—'the houses generally consist of two stories: the ground floor, raised above the level of the pathway, is used as a shop or store: the first floor has a verandah and a balcony of carved wood which is painted in some bright colour—red, yellow or sea-green—so that the effect is very brilliant. The Hindu temples are small and unobtrusive.'

These things, which seemed worth recording to one who had seen nothing of the east except the city of Bombay, might be said of almost any Indian town of any size—Baroda must have been very barren of public buildings if that is all that a visitor could manage to record. The Palace was in keeping :

'One of the ordinary residences of native Princes, built under European inspiration and presents a poor front: but there was a great display of mirrors and lustres inside and the attendants were in fine costumes.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Picturesque India*, by W. S. Cairne, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> *The Prince of Wales' Tour*, by W. H. Russell, pp. 192 and 193.

## VII

Such was the territory which Madhav Rao and his colleagues undertook to administer, and such the city which the Maharaja was afterwards to adorn and beautify. Much still remains to be done. Perfection eludes those who are in pursuit of her; the ever-growing needs of the people gallop ahead of the efforts to keep pace with them; the purlieus of the city are still a labyrinth of mean lanes, ill ventilated and innocent of drainage; malaria and the scourge of mosquitoes still strike the population year by year. But the task of the Minister was, if one be permitted the Indian phrase, rather that of Siva the Destroyer and Purifier, and it remained for the Maharaja to enter upon the more positive task of Vishnu, whose beneficent attribute it is to reconstruct, to bring fresh life to the people, and to lead the world to the ultimate goal of happiness.

In justice to Malhar Rao and especially to his immediate predecessors it is only fair to remember that Baroda was only the last and perhaps the most startling example of a long series. In 1828 the ruler of Udaipur was 'a man of no character, addicted to vicious habits and low pursuits', and the State experienced the results to be expected from a ruler of that type. In 1867 the State of Jodhpur was upon the brink of rebellion owing to general misgovernment. In 1837-8 such was the state of disorganization in Indore that the British Government was forced to intervene, fortunately with happy effect. About 1840 so bad were the affairs of Kolhapur that 'misrule could scarcely have reached a greater pitch', and after a regular rebellion had been quelled, the management was assumed by the British. Earlier still the Maharaja of Mysore had been reduced to nominal sovereignty. Gwalior, under the guidance of Sir Dinkar Rao, who shares with Sir Ma-

dhav Rao the honour of being one of the great outstanding Indian figures of the time, was a conspicuous and shining example of good government.

All this is now changed. Closer contact with the West and the march of the years have brought many, if not most, of the Indian States into harmony with the ideas of government as understood in British India. Exceptions only prove the rule. The Sovereign no longer looks upon the State as an estate to be exploited for the benefit of himself, and we can cordially and frankly accept the assurances of the leading Princes that their sole object is the welfare and prosperity of their peoples. We need not be blind to the fact that instances of no very distant date can be quoted to the contrary, nor need we in any fulsome spirit pretend that the highest standard has been attained in every State alike. But it remains broadly true that the Government of the States has taken on a new complexion, that the Princes recognize their high responsibilities to an extent very rare in the former days, and that to them, as to Queen Victoria in the famous proclamation of 1877, their hope is that their 'subjects might feel that under their rule the great principles of liberty, equity and justice are secured to them; and that to promote their happiness, to add to their prosperity and advance their welfare, are the ever-present aims and objects' of their rule. It was one of the first and greatest achievements of the young Maharaja of Baroda, that he set this great ideal before his eyes from the beginning of his reign. The State had grown up under traditions of an altogether different kind; under a succession of rulers of whom few were good, some were bad, and more were indifferent, the people may well have been contented with such things as they had, and public opinion was not then sufficiently organized to demand, or even to implore, improvement, until misgovernment drove them to exasperation. Yet

in a comparatively short time Baroda, which had never known direct British administration and had seen but a short interval of government on the British lines, had earned the reputation of being one of the best governed States and of taking a high position in the van of progress. All that the Maharaja has achieved in the course of a long reign is simply the expression of that early ideal of which he has never lost sight.

## *Chapter Two*

### THE MINORITY

IT will not be without advantage to survey here the conditions of India during the period when Khande Rao Gaekwar and Malhar Rao ruled the State of Baroda. In comparing their times with the position of the modern Baroda it is only fair to remember that much which is now commonplace, and more which is the outcome of modern progress, did not exist even in British India. There, however, the fundamental principles of good government had long been observed: the eternal canons of justice, the exercise of a wise moderation, the necessity of sound finance, the preservation of law and order, and a studious respect for religious sentiment. To use the phrases of Sir T. Madhav Rao, 'the object of Government to promote the happiness of all classes alike' was the broad principle upon which the Indian Government had constantly acted, save perhaps in that dark hour between Clive's first and second administration. Indian States had been prone to act upon the contrary principle that 'the object is the greatest happiness of the Sovereign and his friends and dependants'. It was the close adherence to this vicious principle, with reservations as to the meaning of true happiness, that in the ultimate analysis led to the catalogue of failures given in the last chapter, which culminated in the crowning example of Baroda. It was from this principle, as interpreted by men of low mind, whose pre-occupation was self-interest, and whose idea of happiness was the gratification of greed or of sensual pleasure, that sprang the disloyalty of the Sardars, the discontent of the Army, and the less articulate murmurs of the peasantry.

But if the Government of India were actuated by the highest principles, if the administration of justice had been well organized, and the collection of the revenues



was not unduly harsh, if the corruption of the highest officers had been sternly curbed, little had been done towards the material development of the country and the moral uplift of the people generally :

‘It has only been within the last thirty or forty years,’ writes Strachey in 1888, ‘and especially since the transfer of the Government from the East India Company to the Crown, that we have at all recognized the duties which thus fall upon us. Before that time India was to a great extent governed on principles that might have commended themselves to a beneficent oriental ruler rather than to modern Englishmen. Even an enlightened man like Sir Charles Metcalfe could maintain sixty years ago that “India required no roads : and in fact there were none”.’<sup>1</sup>

It was under Lord Dalhousie that India made her great advance. He it was who founded the Public Works Department, opened the Ganges Canal, started the railways on their conquering career, and introduced cheap postage and the electric telegraph. The storm of the Mutiny gave pause to these activities. But when the country had again settled down to those forty halcyon years between the Mutiny and the later manifestation of Indian unrest, Lord Lawrence took up the tale where Dalhousie had left it. ‘He zealously pushed on railways, canals, and public works. British capital poured into the country : commerce developed ; schools and colleges grew and multiplied ; peace reigned in British territory and Native States.’<sup>2</sup> Lawrence was the champion of the peasantry. Temporary settlements were the accepted policy, and Cornwallis’s Bengal experiment remained, and remains, the sole example of a permanent settlement in India. The extension of education to the masses practically began with Sir C. Wood’s famous dispatch of 1854,

<sup>1</sup> *India*, by Sir John Strachey, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> *India*, by Sir Verney Lovett, p. 141.

but although of course the value of education had for many centuries been known in India and the ancient Indian Universities are for ever famous, the progress towards the establishment of schools on the more modern plan was very slow. There were in all in India in 1870-1 only some 16,000 schools with a little over half-a-million pupils; in 1927-8 in Baroda State alone there were 2,859 Government schools attended by over 200,000 scholars. In 1871 the mileage of railways open to traffic was but 5,057. The organized and scientific control of famines had only lately been introduced, and the first awakening to the needs of sanitation came from a report on the health of the army, the unsatisfactory condition of which was attributed in part to the insanitary condition of the general population. Local Self-government had to wait for its great impulse until the time of Lord Ripon. Forests were only brought under scientific management during the time of Sir Dietrich Brandis, who was the first Inspector-General of Forests to the Government of India and held that office from 1864 to 1883. Of the other departments of the State it is hardly necessary to speak. Co-operation, Agriculture, Commerce, Veterinary—these and the branches of other Departments such as Technical Education were either founded or developed within recent years.

## II

No Indian Prince could be expected to initiate reforms on Western lines without a lead from the Government of India, unless, indeed, he were of the fibre of the present Maharaja of Baroda and had evolved his own independent ideas from personal contact with the West. It was not of course because Malhar Rao did not conform to Western standards that he was deposed, but because, judged by any standard of common humanity, he was unfit to rule. But Madhav Rao had been inoculated with the Western

ideas of the time; he had been marching, if not foot to foot, at least only a little behind the Government of India and, short as was the period that had elapsed since Dalhousie began his reforms, he was quick to realize their potentiality and justly to appreciate the fundamentals in which reform was urgently called for. In all that he did it is only fair to remember that he had the friendly advice and shrewd suggestions of the very loyal gentlemen who as representatives of the British Government so cordially worked with him.

His programme was comprehensive. It covered the main pillars of good government, law and order, a purified system of justice, the development of public works, education, medical help, finance, and the machinery of government. Here it is *in extenso*:

- (a) To maintain public order and tranquillity with firmness and moderation.
- (b) To redress the accumulated complaints arising out of past maladministration, whether of the Sardars, bankers, ryots or others.
- (c) To establish a proper and sufficient machinery for the dispensation of justice in both its branches.
- (d) To provide a police commensurate with the extent of the country and with the density and character of the population.
- (e) To provide for the execution of necessary or useful public works.
- (f) To promote popular education.
- (g) To provide suitable medical agencies for the benefit of the people.
- (h) To reduce the burden of taxation where it is excessive, to readjust taxes where they require to be readjusted, and to abolish such taxes as are totally objectionable.
- (i) To enforce economy in expenditure, to restrain waste, to reduce extravagance, and to prevent losses arising from corruption and malversation. And pre-eminently

to keep the expenditure fairly below the receipts, so that a surplus may become available as a provision for adverse seasons and available also for further administrative improvements.

- (j) To greatly strengthen the executive establishments, so that Government may pervade and be coextensive with the country and population and may make itself felt throughout these dominions.<sup>1</sup>

This was a formidable, if a popular, programme. It aimed at raising the Government of Baroda to the level of that of British India, upon which indeed it was modelled. It had the great merit of proposing little or nothing in which the Minister was likely to encounter resistance, passive or active, from the people, who were shrewd enough to know that it was entirely to their interest that public order should be maintained, that the administration of justice should be pure and impartial, and that an equitable and well-regulated system of taxation, coupled with the abolition of vexatious or obnoxious monopolies, was all in their favour. But the amount of labour involved was enormous. To the great tasks of reorganization of the Police, establishment of regular Courts of Justice, and settlement of the land, to say nothing of medical relief, public works, and the promotion of education, were added the ordinary routine of administration, political work with tributaries and surrounding Indian States, ceremonial visits, and the patient hearing of the individual complaints—and they were not a few. The finances were in complete disorder; though besides the paltry sum found in the Treasury there were other sums in different banks and the 40 lakhs which Sir Lewis Pelly had taken from the Palace. There was too, that upon which the whole future hinged—the watchful care of the little boy who was soon to be master of the whole machine.

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda State Administration Report*, 1879-80, p. 45.

## III

Not the least among the early problems which thus called for solution was the control of the Sardars or Nobles of the State. They—or some of them—had certainly suffered under the late régime, but if they had suffered they had nevertheless enjoyed great privileges. They acquiesced in the decision of the Paramount Power to arrest Malhar Rao, and afterwards when he was deposed they did not raise a finger on his behalf. It was not until they began to realize that their special privileges were to be curtailed and they themselves not only made amenable to the ordinary laws of the State but even relegated to the background, that murmurs began to be heard. These nobles were the descendants of military chiefs who had come into Gujerat with the conquering Gaekwar Damaji Rao, as the barons of Normandy had come seven centuries before with conquering William into England. They had their armed retainers and they claimed that though these were paid by the State, the State was not competent to reduce their numbers, or to interfere with them in any way. They were captains of companies, and insisted that the office was hereditary, even claiming that the benefits of the Hindu laws of adoption should apply to their case. Their complaints were to be heard only by the Maharaja or the Minister; and their retainers, however lowly, should not be triable by the ordinary Courts—or if so tried should be handed over to themselves for execution of the sentence. The new Police were distasteful to them, for they naïvely argued that their own allowances and companies should have been increased, since the new force ‘scarcely performs its duties with half the success which used to attend our arms’.

No Minister could be expected to concede these extravagant demands. The State would willingly have turned

to account the prestige and importance of men of the highest rank if they for their part had been prepared to act with moderation and to accept modern conceptions of government. They were not. They wanted to go where they chose and not where the necessity of the moment took them. They wanted to travel in style with much pomp and show. They were at least under the suspicion that for these semi-regal progresses, forced contributions of transport, labour, provisions, what not, would be levied from the people. Lastly, they declined to acknowledge the authority of the Magistrates. 'Obviously,' says the Minister, 'the Administration cannot let loose a number of Sardars with bodies of armed followers to roam aimlessly over the realm without any guidance and control from the local magistrates.'<sup>1</sup>

The situation demanded both firmness and tact. A Sardars' Court was established with a special bench for the purpose of trying cases in which their order was involved. Inquiry was made into individual grievances, and wrongs were righted. By 1879-80 the Sardars had begun to settle down and to accommodate themselves to the new order. They had 'subsided to the level of good sense and moderation'; they felt a new sense of security, and were getting out of debt. From that time onwards we hear nothing of them, so that when the Maharaja took up the reins of government, the Sardar question, at any rate in an acute form, had ceased to exist.

This, and other kindred matters such as the settlement of the claims of bankers and jewellers against the late Maharaja, were preliminary though essential tasks, for it was necessary to clear the ground of the old debris before building the structure of the new administration. The task of the unwearying Minister was twofold. If on the one hand he was required so to put the machine of State

<sup>1</sup> *Administration Report*, 1878-9, p. 56.

into good working order that the work of the young and inexperienced Ruler should be mainly to guide and develop on the established lines, it was equally essential so to train and instruct that Ruler that, so far as was humanly possible, he might avoid the snares and temptations inherent in his traditional surroundings. There was something akin to romance in the call of the illiterate boy, living in honourable obscurity in his native village in Khandesh, to be the sovereign of one of the leading States in India. To explain how this happened we must for a few moments search the dusty records of genealogy. The original founder of the Gaekwar house was Damaji, from whom, through his elder grandson, all the ruling Gaekwars are descended. Fourth in the line of descent from Damaji came Anand Rao and Sayaji Rao II, both of whom reigned over Baroda, and Fateh Singh, who acted as regent for the imbecile Anand Rao. It is from Sayaji Rao II that the brothers Khande Rao and Malhar Rao, of whom we have already heard so much, are descended; and Sayaji Rao III, the subject of these memoirs, is the adopted son of Khande Rao through his widow the Maharani Jamna Bai.

But Damaji had also a second grandson, Pratap Rao, and a brother, Jhingoji, who were respectively the founders of more remote lines of the Gaekwar family; and Maharaja Sayaji Rao and his brothers Anand Rao and Sampat Rao were fifth in the descent from Pratap Rao. Similarly possible claimants to the vacant throne existed in the persons of Ganpat Rao and Khande Rao, who were fifth in descent from Jhingoji. Apart then from any considerations of the welfare of Baroda State, from the desire of the Government of India for a minority, or from the personal fitness of any one of these claimants to rule, it was in strict accordance with recognized law that, failing any surviving male in the senior line, some scion of the house of Pratap

Rao was entitled to succeed. The case was, however, not so easy as that. Pratap Rao had all along been under suspicion of a bar sinister and the suspicion had deepened into an assumption. Moreover on the death of the Regent Fateh Singh, his widow Radha Bai had wished to become *sati*; she had expressed her intention, that is to say, of burning herself on the funeral pyre of her husband; and as the reform of Lord William Bentinck had not yet come into force, and the practice had not been discountenanced in the States, the then Resident had to resort to a form of bribery to persuade her to give up the idea. He offered her the chance of adoption on condition that the boy adopted should succeed to the private estates of Fateh Singh, but should have no place in the succession. She accepted the terms, but as soon as the adoption was complete repudiated the renunciation of the throne. She even claimed that the boy, who was one of the Gaekwars of the Jhingoji or junior branch, had a better right than the reigning Maharaja, but in any case that he should succeed him. These claims were of course not admitted either by the Maharaja or by the Government of India. Govind Rao, the adopted son, died in the course of nature and left behind him two sons, Sadashiv Rao and Murar Rao, who were thus added as aspirants to the vacant throne.

Nothing is harder to follow than the narrative of genealogy, especially when it is complicated by unfamiliar names. It is better, therefore, to re-state the position with which the Government of India had to deal. There were in the senior line the two sons of the adopted son of Fateh Singh's widow, who, as already explained, were debarred from the succession by the terms of the adoption. These sons did not, however, lose whatever right their father had by virtue of his birth in the junior line. There were in the second line, supposed illegitimate, the three sons of Kashi Rao and another, Dada Saheb, who was

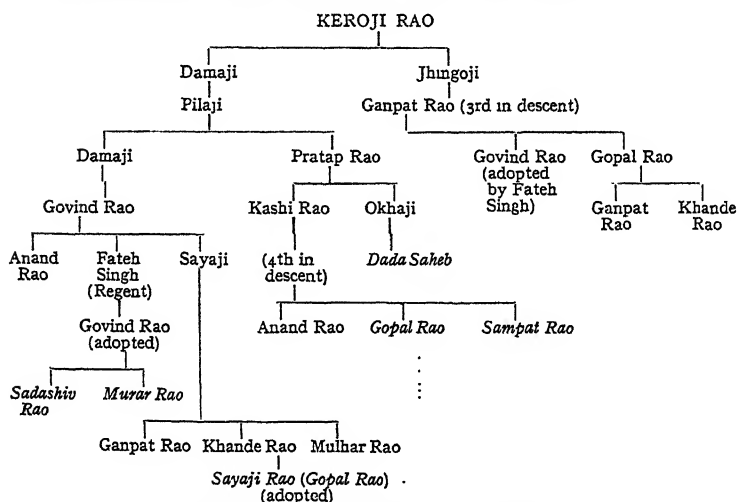


purposely omitted from the above genealogy. There were in the junior lines the two young men Ganpat Rao and Khande Rao. It therefore appeared that everything depended upon the legitimacy of the second line, that of Pratap Rao. The senior line was extinct and only transcendent qualifications in the claimants themselves would have induced the Government of India to admit claims once specially barred; while there was the further obstacle that the adopted son about whom all the fuss had been made, had become involved with the mutineers in the rebellion of 1857.<sup>1</sup>

## IV

The Government of India therefore appointed a Commission consisting of Colonel Etheridge and Mr. Elliot, District Magistrate of Nasik, whose chief duty seems to have been to decide this question of illegitimacy. Interesting among the witnesses are the 'family preceptors' (*upadhyaya*) of the Gaekwars, of Scindia, of Holkar, and of

<sup>1</sup> The following table will explain the position more clearly:



The possible claimants to the vacant gadi are indicated by italics.

the Maharaja of Nepal, whose evidence was unanimous and emphatic that illegitimate children are never shown in the family tree. Upon this and other evidence the Committee reported that the alleged illegitimacy of Pratap Rao and his line had no foundation in fact, and that the Government of India were therefore free to make their choice from it. This was certainly welcome news. The Government of India undoubtedly wished for a minority if it could by any means be arranged. They felt that Baroda had gone too far on the way to ruin to be pulled back by any adult claimant; and the alternative of forcing a Minister upon a reluctant Gaekwar and of bringing the Resident prominently into the picture was distasteful, not only because it did not accord with the policy of non-interference in Indian States, but also because that way friction was almost inevitable. The only possible claimants who were minors were the four Khandesh boys—Anand Rao, Gopal Rao, Sampat Rao, and Dada Saheb. It was also fortunate for the Government of India, whether the decision was spontaneous or inspired, that Her Highness Maharani Jamna Bai and the Family Priest, a person by no means to be ignored, were satisfied as to the legitimacy; and Her Highness ‘expressed her most decided preference for adopting one of the boys of the Pratap Rao family’. And so a boy of that family it was. With all the currents setting in one direction, the decision of the Government of India must have been a foregone conclusion. They ‘duly weighed the various considerations which affect each member of the family who might be held to be eligible’, but they were no doubt influenced by ‘the paramount importance of making such a selection as shall afford the best prospect of advantage to the Baroda State’. The Sardars acquiesced in the decision.<sup>1</sup> But which was it to be? One fine day, according

<sup>1</sup> Proclamation and Note by A. Meade.

to the probable story, a band of police appeared in the village of Kavhana and carried off the three boys chosen, Gopal Rao, Sampat Rao, and Dada Saheb to Nasik. It is not clear why Anand Rao, who was the eldest of the three brothers, was left out and his cousin substituted; possibly he was already too old and would have had to be given full power before the effects of the desired minority Government could be felt. Be that as it may, the boys were duly dispatched under escort to Baroda, and the responsibility for the fateful choice fell upon the Maharani, to whom Baroda State has much reason to be grateful. Legends, picturesque but unauthenticated, cluster round this momentous episode: the best known is that when Gopal Rao was asked why he had come he answered: 'I have come to be Maharaja'. At any rate the Maharani took three days to consider her choice and then announced that it had fallen upon Gopal Rao. The Agent to the Governor-General and the Minister acquiesced, and so on the 27th May 1875 Gopal Rao, now the son of the Maharani, adopted with all the elaborate rites<sup>1</sup> of the Hindu religion, was placed, literally, for he was lifted up by Sir Richard Meade for the purpose, upon the throne of Baroda and took the title of Sayaji Rao III.

Contemporary accounts describe him as looking young for his age—'a quiet self-possessed boy with a thoughtful expression of face and an extremely aimable disposition'—a healthy boy though not very robust—a small delicately framed lad with a bright pleasant face<sup>2</sup> as he appeared to the Prince of Wales, blazing with jewels from head to foot. As time went on he developed into a typical English schoolboy with good health and high spirits. Whatever delicacy there may have been seemed

<sup>1</sup> There is an interesting document extant which explains the whole programme of the adoption in minute detail.

<sup>2</sup> *The Prince of Wales' Tour in India*, by Russell, p. 137.

to have passed off. He was quiet and well-mannered but, characteristically enough, reserved as to matters connected with himself. He took kindly to billiards, and especially to riding, which stood him in good stead throughout his life, until advancing years and bouts of ill-health restricted those exuberant gallops of miles to more sober exercise within his own grounds or over the established tracks round Baroda.

It must be remembered that when the young Gopal Rao left Kaviana he was in the strictest sense illiterate. He could neither read nor write. His education therefore began at the age of twelve, literally from the beginning, at the time when an English boy is just leaving his preparatory for his public school. It is hardly surprising that at the outset Mr. Elliot thought him 'apparently and actually dull',<sup>1</sup> and even as late as 1879 he was pronounced to be not quick but very persevering. And it was this perseverance that carried him through. It is a burden not placed upon many boys of twelve to acquire four languages from the alphabet onwards, each with a different script, each with a genius of its own, and one—and that in some sense the most important—wholly unconnected with any Eastern tongue. Add to this history, geography, and as much of elementary mathematics as he could stand; and, what was so important to a future autocratic ruler, special instruction in the duties of a prince towards his people, in the laws which controlled crime, and regulated the intercourse of man with man, and in the canons of good administration directed towards the health, contentment, and prosperity of the subject. All this had somehow to be got through in six years. The experiment was vitally important to Baroda State and therefore to the Government of India which had made itself responsible for it. It must have been with an increasing sense of

<sup>1</sup> Pamphlet on Education, p. 21.

thankfulness, not to say triumph, that the Minister was able to report, year after year, the gradual advance of general knowledge and the development of character upon the lines he would have desired. The Maharaja was weak in mathematics, a failing in which he will have the hearty sympathy of a good many of us. But in all other respects he made excellent progress, and at the close of the minority he could read English books with facility, converse in English with ease, and even make short speeches in the language. For his general education he was chiefly indebted to Mr. F. A. H. Elliot, his principal tutor, with whom he was on cordial and even affectionate terms; for his moral character the authorities had largely to thank the accomplished lady the Maharani Jamna Bai, 'whose superior in sound sense', said the Minister in a speech at a banquet on the occasion of Queen Victoria's assumption of the Imperial title, 'the recesses of Asiatic Palaces might be explored in vain to discover'.<sup>1</sup>

We must not deceive ourselves. It is extremely probable that, when the Maharaja assumed charge of the State at the close of the year 1881, any ordinary schoolboy of the same age at an English public school could have beaten him out of the field in an examination. But examinations are no test of a prince's ability to rule. The foundations of his education had been so well and truly laid, with such extraordinary and even nervous care, that his natural intelligence and natural inclination for the acquisition of knowledge was not only brought to bear upon the work of ruling the State, but carried the Maharaja to a pinnacle of popularity in India. How anxious was the care may be deduced from a memorandum which Mr. Melvill, the Agent to the Governor-General, gave to His Highness in February 1880. In it he enjoins loyalty to the Maharani, affection to his sister, and kindness to the

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda State Administration Report*, 1876-7, p. 40.

family, a dignified reserve towards servants, and abstention from arbitrary interference in matters of State. He was specially warned against the intrigues of unprincipled men in Baroda, who from motives of self-interest would be importunate to exact promises the implications of which could not be foreseen. Perhaps in this last injunction lay the germs of that caution which has always been characteristic of the Maharaja. It was, it would seem, Polonius once more preaching to Laertes that he should 'love all men, trust a few', for the Maharaja has ever been slow to give his confidence to any one and then not unreservedly.

## V

It was, then, not without a certain pride in his young charge and a certain elation at the bright prospects before the State that the great Minister was able to surrender the reins of Government on the 28th December 1881. The British Government has been charged, very unfairly it would seem, with haste in making over the State to the autocratic rule of a mere boy, thus hurriedly prepared for his duties. It has been said that they had gained their end; they had pulled down the previous ruler, carried out their project of a minority régime, and now took the earliest opportunity to rid themselves of the responsibility. Such insinuations as these are baseless. The British Government having decided, however reluctantly, that Malhar Rao was unfit to rule, and that the obligation lay upon them to rescue the people of Baroda State from oppression and misgovernment, not unnaturally took the only course open to them to guard against a repetition of these scandals. They therefore appointed a Minister of tried ability and blameless character who could be relied upon to work in harmony with their own agent. But they were careful all along not only to disclaim all idea of annexation,

but to give the minority Government as completely as possible the character of a native Indian administration. Unless the boy of their choice, or at any rate of their approval, was entirely to belie expectations—and the Minister had reported ‘a genuine desire to acquit himself well as a ruler’ and ‘a very reasonable prospect of his striving to promote the welfare of his subjects’—it was consistent with their policy to free Baroda State from its leading-strings as soon as possible and to give it into the keeping of its rightful Maharaja. The sequel showed that their courage was justified: at the time it may well have seemed a reasoned guess. They had heard nothing but good of the progress of the State under the Minister, of the careful attention of the tutor, and of the loving and watchful care of Her Highness the Maharani. They had heard nothing but good of the little pupil. But there must have been some misgiving lest, when all the restraints of official tutelage were removed, the influence of the Maharani would not prevail against the self-seekers, the courtiers, and the flatterers who, as the experience of the past had taught them, were ready and eager to take advantage of any sign of weakness. Such misgivings, if any there were, disappeared in the course of those early critical years. A time was to come when the Maharaja was not to escape unscathed by criticism, but when that time arrived his character was formed, his decision taken, and the deeds or utterances which inspired such criticism were of an altogether different nature from those which led to the downfall of his predecessor.

## VI

Meanwhile the reconstruction of the State went on. Madhav Rao endeavoured to remodel it upon the British pattern, having, it would seem, boundless admiration for the British character. In the midst of his report

for 1877-8 he burst out into something like a panegyric—presumably for the consumption of the Maharaja :

‘The Native States are reaping many other solid advantages from the union of their destinies with those of the Paramount Power. It is an immeasurable advantage to be in cordial contact with a higher civilization, including higher political wisdom and higher political virtues. We are now reaping the fruits of this contact more abundantly than ever before. Our ideal of good government has been greatly elevated.’<sup>1</sup>

This passage, which makes strange reading in the light of modern utterances, was by way of introduction to the triumphant catalogue of achievements in the short space of two years.

First and foremost came the reorganization of justice and the establishment of a sound Police. It is, of course, absurd to suppose that Baroda State had been governed for a century without some kind of organization; as a matter of fact the system of Government established by the great Shivaji and carried on and developed during the period of the great Maratha Peshwas was very admirable, and was probably well suited to the times. But abuses crept in. Justice had become venal; men were thrown into prison without trial; property was confiscated at the caprice of the ruler; the roads, notably in the northern part of the State, were unsafe. There were Police, especially in Baroda City, but the distribution of the force was bad and many men had been diverted from their proper duties. Moreover, the men had grown accustomed to lax discipline; some of them were in league with bad characters in the perpetration of actual crimes, and there were signs of resentment when they were forced to abandon their easy life for the stricter one of regulated service. All this had to be put right. Regular courts

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda State Administration Report, 1877-8, p. 51.*



were established with proper gradation of powers. The Police were organized and placed under suitable authority.

‘The administration of justice in the States was not totally set aside, only because it was not without some fiscal value—It was a source of power useful as an auxiliary in the working of the general money-exacting machinery of the State.’<sup>1</sup>

Such a conception was intolerable. As early as 1877 the people had begun to feel that they could seek justice without fear or favour. The detection and prevention of crime was placed upon a sounder footing, and if decrees were not executed with the precision and dispatch of later days, that was because it was felt that the innovation must proceed cautiously and with moderation lest too drastic measures should drive the people into ruin and despair. And so it went on. The old Public Works Department was so thoroughly rotten that no part of it was worth keeping. The accounts were in terrible disorder; enormous sums had been drawn from the Treasury which remained unadjusted, and though public buildings there were, they had been built with very little regard to economy. Schools now began to spring up; hospitals and dispensaries were established; lines were built, and a military hospital for the army; railways were gradually extended, though at present only from Dabhoi, a town not very far from the capital which now became connected at two points with the Bombay, Baroda, and Central India Railway. Public gardens were laid out in Baroda City and a new College or High School was built. Lastly, the present Palace, known as the Lakshmi Vilas, was commenced in place of the old and wholly inadequate residence in the heart of the City.

Most of these things belonged to Baroda itself. But one reads not without some astonishment of the need for public offices in the interior of the country. The Minister

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda State Administration Report*, 1875-6, p. 26.

turned his eyes towards irrigation and the making of metalled roads but he practically abandoned these activities, the first because the lie of the country was generally unfavourable to such works, and the second because of the heavy cost involved. It is a curious commentary on his decision that though irrigation works have since been undertaken, hardly any have been successful, and that the cost of making roads has hitherto baffled the Government of Baroda. Except in the capital and in Kathiawar, where the cost was not so heavy and where famine and distress had to be met by relief works, there is hardly a metalled road in the Raj.

But in the short time at his disposal the Minister could not do everything. Most serious of all, as most involving the prosperity of the people and the revenue of the State, was the land problem. Something was done to lighten the burden on the ryot: the ryotwari system was introduced, by which each peasant pays for his holding directly to the State. But no scientific survey was attempted, and while the immediate pressure was taken off and many vexatious taxes were abolished, it was left to the Maharaja to develop and perfect the system of the land revenue in less breathless haste.

Much no doubt remained to be done, not merely in the order of maintenance nor in the spirit of progress to keep pace with the times, but of actual and immediate reconstruction. Sir T. Madhav Rao may well be excused his little song of triumph when the time approached for him to deliver the reins into other hands:

‘From the facts and figures given in this and in the previous reports, it will I trust be seen that the country has reached a fair state of preparation for the accession of the young Maharaja to power and for smooth and steady progress thereafter. Perfect tranquillity prevails. Life and property are secure. Justice is fairly administered. The finances are in a

highly flourishing condition. Public Works have been liberally provided. Medical agencies are well at work. Sanitation has not been neglected. Education has been considerably developed, both vertically and laterally. In short the people are getting a far larger return of good for the taxes they pay than ever before. The machinery of administration has been properly organised and established. . . . Many intricate and long standing disputes or difficulties have been settled. Our relations with our neighbours have been placed on a pleasanter and more honourable footing. Those with the Imperial Government are all that could be wished for. It is with these many and substantial advantages that the well-educated Maharaja will enter shortly upon the exercise of power.’<sup>1</sup>

It was a record of which the Minister might well be proud. It is a record which, looking back upon fifty years of rule, the Maharaja can truthfully repeat to-day—that and more. The seed had been sown: in due course Baroda was to reap the harvest abundantly.

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda State Administration Report, 1880-1, p. 115.*





HIS HIGHNESS MAHARAJA SAYAJI RAO III  
(in 1881)

## Chapter Three

### ACCESSION TO POWER

THREE notable events punctuated those placid years of preparation of the young Maharaja for his high office and of the restoration of the State to order and prosperity. On the 8th November 1875 the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward) sailed into Bombay Harbour on board the *Serapis* and was received by the Viceroy and many of the Princes of India. Among them came the young Sayaji Rao, escorted by the Dewan and a numerous train. Dressed for the visit of courtesy in jewels which radiated all the colours of the rainbow, he seems to have dazzled all eyes except his own. There may be times when the Maharaja must, in conformity with etiquette and public opinion, deck himself in all the splendour which wardrobe and jewel-case can supply, but it is characteristic of him, at least in these later years, that he prefers the utmost simplicity. When others are resplendent in gay turbans, many-coloured coats, or bright uniforms, he appears even on high ceremonial occasions in a plain silk suit and the ordinary Maratha hat unrelieved by anything, unless it be the light blue sash of the Star of India and the diamond ornaments of his own Orders. Much was said of his 'quiet dignity' and his 'self-possession' on this great occasion, the first of its kind in a long life. But after all what could you expect? Indians have characteristically a certain natural gravity, and all observers have remarked upon the value which they attach to dignity. Here was a little boy unaccustomed to Courts and pageants, called upon to play his part as the Ruler of a great State among his fellow Princes and in the presence of the son of the Queen. Was it not in the order of things that he should bear himself with quiet and reserved dignity as became the occasion?

The Maharaja himself has but little recollection of the

details of that historic event. His memory keeps a blurred impression of splendour, of elephants with gorgeous trappings, and smart horses, and carriages, and goings to and fro, and of a 'stoutish' bearded man as the central figure. As he remarked to me very simply, 'I had nothing to compare it with.' And when later on the Prince proposed a visit to Baroda and all the city was agog with hurried preparations and excited programmes, we may be sure that the little boy, still unlettered, since only five months had passed since the installation, took but little share in the direction of all the festivities in which he was to play the leading part. What has stuck in his mind was that the banquet was held in a tin shed, decorated no doubt for the purpose, but in itself such as 'you would not want to stable your horses in'. Baroda had certainly very little time in which to improvise its welcome, for the visit was, as it were, sprung upon it; but it seems strange that amidst all the lavish outpourings of wealth upon jewels and elephants, upon courtiers and favourites and courtesans, no better banqueting-hall could be found for such a guest as the Prince of Wales. Far different was the scene when at the beginning of 1929 the heir apparent to the throne of Baroda was married, and a large company sat down in the great Durbar Hall of the Lakshmi Vilas Palace to tables laden with choice flowers and miniature fountains playing over the variegated colours lighted by electricity. The Maharaja then in an eloquent speech let his memory play upon the past; perhaps it carried him back to that distant time when he sat in his tin shed beside the Prince, tongue-tied for want of English.

## II

In 1877 came the great Delhi Assemblage gathered together to hear the Proclamation by which Queen Victoria assumed the title of Empress of India. There the young

Gaekwar met Holkar of Indore and Sindhia of Gwalior, the two States which with Baroda and Kolhapur remain as the vigorous relics of the once mighty Maratha Empire. There too were the Princes of another order, the Chiefs of Rajputana and the Maharaja of Mysore, and, most powerful of all, the Nizam of Hyderabad, whose inheritance keeps alive the memory of the Moghul Empire.

But to the Maharaja himself the most gratifying incident of the Assemblage was the bestowal upon him of a banner and of the Imperial Gold Medal in the name of the Queen-Empress. To these tokens of friendly esteem was added the resounding title of Ferzand-i-Khas-Dowlat-i-Englishia, generally translated 'most favoured Son of the English Empire'. The customary visits were paid; the customary festivities were patiently borne, and the Maharaja left Delhi with the experience behind him of having participated for the first time, as an honoured and prominent guest, in what was the most important pageant that had taken place in India for many a long day. Madhav Rao received the honourable title of Raja. He dwells upon the educative value of these historic shows and they may have had some at the time. As Lord Curzon said on a similar occasion, 'the Durbar meant not a panorama or a procession. It was a landmark in the history of the people and a chapter in the ritual of the State.'<sup>1</sup> But probably better value was obtained from the first of the many tours His Highness has undertaken throughout the world. It was the first enterprise in foreign travel to which he—and there will be few to disagree—attaches so much importance. The young Maharaja was taken to Agra, Lucknow, and Allahabad, and he bathed in the sacred waters of the Ganges at Benares. That was a very right and proper thing to do. In later years the Maharaja has developed a broad toleration to all religions, which he holds are

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Curzon*, Ronaldshay, vol. ii, p. 233.



fundamentally the same, in that in varying forms they worship the essential Deity and have for foundation the broad bases of human life and happiness. Therefore if a man be a Hindu, let him be a Hindu and conform to the religion of his fathers; for it makes no difference. If he be a Christian, by all means let him remain a Christian; if a Musulman, a Musulman. But as the Maharaja is a Hindu, he has upon his own principles no incentive to be anything else.

### III

But of all the three great events which preceded the assumption of power, that which most concerned His Highness was his own marriage. A difficulty arose. By the common usage of Hindus, the choice of a bride lay, not with His Highness but with the Maharani Jamna Bai, and the little Maharaja was content to abide by her decision. The Minister's picturesque description of her embarrassments cannot be bettered:

'In the year under review (1878-79) Her Highness the Maharani Jamna Bai Saheb, as the head of the Gaekwar family had much to do by way of inquiries for a suitable bride for the young Gaekwar. . . . Trusted emissaries started from Baroda and went to divers countries, some travelling in disguise and others with pomp and circumstance. In a short time descriptive letters, illustrative photographs and complete horoscopes wonderfully showing all the planets in their best behaviour poured in upon the Maharani in almost embarrassing abundance. The blessing of the tutelary deities was devoutly invoked, the good will of the priests was propitiated and astrologers in solemn conclave were bidden to unerringly interpret the mystic influences of the Zodiac. But the Maharani was also desirous of fulfilling more prosaic conditions and she had to satisfy in her choice such worldly persons as the Governor-General's Agent and the Dewan of the State.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda State Administration Report*, 1878-9, p. 41.

None of these aspiring damsels came up to expectation, though the stars fought for them, it would seem impartially. Or perhaps it would be fairer to say that the Maharani could not choose from these bewildering and imperfect data, and none of the aspirants would come to Baroda to be looked over. She applied to the Dewan in her perplexity and he went to Poona, having previously arranged that several eligible young ladies should happen to be present 'by pure accident', says the Minister with a twinkle in his eye. But even this would not do. Things were getting serious; 'the most plastic Shastris of the palace could not cite authority to perform the marriage without a bride.'<sup>1</sup> And yet the young Gaekwar must somehow be married. The net was cast wider; and at last the Minister was able to report that he had found the long-wished-for lady from the princely house of his own native Tanjore.

The wedding was duly celebrated with all the solemn ceremonies of Hindu ritual and all the splendour befitting an oriental ruler. But here again an Englishman would have missed the noble grandeur of a Westminster Abbey and the spacious approaches that add dignity to a high State function. The Mandap or pavilion, hallowed by tradition and custom on account of the weddings of the Gaekwars, stood on the spot which is now covered by the Engineering Workshops attached to the technical school, one of the finest buildings of modern Baroda. It now stands facing the noble road that leads past the Palace to the suburban residence of Makerpura, and the intervening maidan is used at the appropriate seasons for games of cricket or hockey, or other recreations of the City's youth. Then it was simply a quarter of the city covered with the usual mean houses and mean streets, in the middle of which the Mandap was hidden away. But like the Coronation

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

Stone of the Scottish Kings, association had thrown a glamour over it, and when His Highness changed the venue of royal marriages to the Nazarbagh, which, though it is in the heart of the city, is reached by broad streets and has an adequate, though not imposing, approach, we may well imagine that there were conservative souls who sighed at the disappearance of a tradition.

The opportunity was taken of this large and distinguished assembly to lay the foundation-stone of the Lakshmi Vilas Palace, 'the home of fortune', a name which gave occasion to many allusions in the complimentary speeches inevitable at such times. The Palace, which was built in private gardens acquired for the purpose, is in the Indo-Saracenic style, and is surrounded by extensive grounds, beautifully laid out by the Maharaja, and an object of his pardonable pride. It is now the town home of the royal family, and in these later days when the trying climate of Baroda compels the Maharaja's absence, that is where he mostly lives during such time as he is able to spend among his people.

On the 28th December 1881 the Maharaja was formally invested with full authority in the State. The time of preparation had been very short—about six and a half years in all—and it had been necessary to omit one important part of the training. Time—or was it opportunity?—had not been found for taking the boy on tour in his own dominions, so that when he became Maharaja in fact as well as in name, he had no personal knowledge of his subjects outside the City, nor they of him. That was, however, soon rectified, for, as we shall see, the Maharaja only waited to be seated firmly in the saddle before he went on tour himself. Anxious as the British Government were to restore the people and State of Baroda to a ruler of the accepted dynasty and to the form of government to which they had long been accus-

tomed, they could not take such a leap in the dark as to entrust them to a youth of eighteen, of whose character indeed they had every reason to hope the best, but of whom, exposed at that critical age to the possibility of evil, nothing could with certainty be predicted. They had testified cordially and frankly to the loving care of that admirable lady the Maharani Jamna Bai, but her influence could not be fully maintained when the Maharaja reached manhood and went out into the world. Accordingly, rules were framed with the concurrence of the Government of India, and accepted by His Highness, which laid down the procedure to be followed in the administration of the State. The rules are noteworthy for the complete absence of any mention of control or even advice by the Agent to the Governor-General; the only stipulation was that if His Highness received any letters direct from him he would answer them himself. The principal innovation was the provision of the Consultative Council consisting of the Dewan and the Heads of the four principal departments, to which were added for certain purposes the Judge of the Varisht (or High) Court. For the purpose of enacting laws and rules affecting the life, liberty, or prosperity of the people there were to be five extra members appointed from the Sardars and the general public. Although this body was to be purely advisory, the provision is interesting because it seems to contain the germ of the Baroda constitution to-day. The Consultative Council has become the Executive Council, which is no longer advisory, but, on the contrary, has wide powers of independent action; the Judges no longer participate in it as of right, but are invited to attend, as indeed are heads of departments, when matters which concern them are before the Council. The enlarged Legislative Consultative Council has blossomed into a separate institution, the Dhara Sabha, with still wider representation, but it remains

advisory. Its resolutions are not binding upon the Government or His Highness, but naturally the opinion of a body largely composed of elected members is not without weight. At the time of the investiture, Lord Ripon was the Viceroy, and it is with his name that the first serious advance in Self-government is associated. Local Self-government was in the air if it had not already taken definite shape, and in proposing this miniature Assembly in which the general public were allowed a thin whisper of voice, Mr. Melvill probably felt sure of a sympathetic hearing at Simla.

One other stipulation is perhaps worth noting. The Government of Baroda were to be told that 'all sentences of death should be carried out by hanging and in no other way'.<sup>1</sup> This was easily accepted by the Maharaja, who probably never thought of ordering anything else, but it is a slight indication of the nervousness of the Government of India. There were to be no more draggings at the tails of elephants, ending with the crushing out of life from the bruised and battered body by the animals' feet. There was not to be another Bhau Shinde, forced to drink the poison which killed him. There was not to be another Govind Naik, weighted with incredible chains and slowly starved on thin gruel and water. Justice was to be stern, impartial, and humane. Those who know the Maharaja and can look back upon the fifty odd years of his reign may well think that such stipulations were superfluous, even a trifle ridiculous. But the events of 1873-5 were too fresh in every one's mind. The Government of India knew the power of tradition and the future was hidden from them.

Sir T. Madhav Rao looked upon the event of investiture as 'ordinary, like the assumption of powers by the

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Government of India to the Agent, Governor-General, Baroda, No. 447, I.P., dated 1.6.1881.

previous Gaekwars',<sup>1</sup> and so in one aspect it was. The Maharaja had already been installed in May 1875, and from that moment he was Maharaja though without powers. The mere transference of the reins of Government from the hands of the Dewan to those of His Highness may well have seemed by comparison unimportant. But the testing-time had now arrived. When Maharani Jamna Bai had elected to adopt the little Gopal Rao, the fate of Baroda for good or ill had been decided. That was irrevocable. Now, when the great experiment was put upon its trial, it would soon be seen whether that fate was to be for good or for ill. To Baroda itself, if the people gave it a thought, the investiture was the more immediately momentous of the two ceremonies. At the installation the time was still far off when the people would feel the weight of, or receive benefit from, the hand of its Ruler. Now at the investiture, to-morrow would show.

If there were misgivings in the minds of those responsible for Baroda, they were not in evidence on the actual occasion. The Viceroy could not come but he deputed the Governor of Bombay to represent him, and it was by the Governor that the Maharaja was actually installed. The Viceroy, Lord Ripon, sent a letter of congratulation in terms which were dignified enough but which, as in most letters of its kind, were perilously near the pompous. Sir James Fergusson read the letter out and followed it up with a short speech in which he first reviewed what had been done in the State during the minority, and then read the Maharaja a little lecture on the duties of a ruler. Here is a short passage which gives the purport of the lecture:

'Happily there are rewards for the faithful discharge of duty, which are continuous and increasing as life goes on, and which

<sup>1</sup> Dewan's Office letter to the Resident, dated 28.7.1881.

will console in the failure and imperfect achievements incidental to human efforts. But to gain those rewards there must be kept ever in view an aim above self-gratification or even human praise, self-denial of that which would injure others or impede our own usefulness, a high principle as the rule and guide: for these are needful to preserve him who is raised above his fellow-men from the perils that beset high places.' <sup>1</sup>

To this His Highness replied in a speech which was obviously not of his own creation, and he assured the Viceroy in the letter which announced his assumption of power that he would not fail always to remember 'an address so impressive'.

#### IV

And so with much bowing and scraping, pleasant compliments, and expressions of mutual goodwill and esteem the visitors departed, and the Maharaja was left alone in possession of his kingdom. Those were years of probation; experience had to be gained, the lessons of the minority had to be applied to actual conditions; the Maharaja had to be Maharaja. It was strenuous work then, and as he then formed his habits, it has been strenuous work ever since. 'There has been no room in my life for relaxation,' he said to a companion on a voyage to India in 1925. 'That is a mistake which I would rectify if I could live my life again.' <sup>2</sup> Perhaps: but from the first he resolved to devote himself to the State. The State was his watchword, and the ruling passion of the State became in the end his master. He has said himself that he has never known the true felicity of domestic life such as less exalted folk enjoy. He has always been the Maharaja and when, now, in his declining years, his Ministers urge him to put aside such cares of State as are of little consequence, he agrees,

<sup>1</sup> *Papers in Connection with the Investiture of H.H. the Maharaja*, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ruler of Baroda*, by Sergeant, p. 62.

but cannot do it. It has been his constant complaint that his officers will not accept responsibility. In the earlier days that may have been true enough; the whole State had become disorganized, and while the Ministers working with and under Sir T. Madhav Rao were efficient enough, it had been found necessary to retain, in large measure at least, a very unsatisfactory subordinate staff. With the advent of a masterful nature and the gradual disappearance of the original Ministers, there grew up a habit in the State of looking to the supreme authority for orders, and in the Maharaja of a certain reluctance to delegate his authority. The Executive Council does now transact the bulk of the business of the State; but certain matters must go to His Highness. 'Why worry?' says the Council. 'Why worry?' echoes the Maharaja, and does.

One of his first tasks was to visit his dominions.<sup>1</sup> In November 1882 he started on a long tour of inspection in Kadi, the most northerly block of Baroda State. He began with Ahmedabad, whither he took with him General Watson, the Agent to the Governor-General, the Minister Kazi Shahabuddin who had succeeded Sir T. Madhav Rao as Dewan, his tutor and friend Mr. Elliot, and some of the nobles of the State. The visit is noteworthy because it was the first he paid in foreign territory as actual Ruling Sovereign of Baroda, but the time was spent in the usual round of ceremonial visits and in sight-seeing. In those early days, the royal progress was marked by a very unwieldy procession of bullock carts, and the story goes that on one occasion a tent was found to be devoted to the complete stock of boots and shoes, including even those which he wore as a little boy, the excuse for this particular piece of folly being that no one knew what pair of shoes His Highness might want and so it was best to be ready for all contingencies. In a letter written in later years

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda State Administration Report*, 1882-3, p. 3.



the Maharaja said that while he thought a Raja ought to enjoy himself, it was no part of enjoyment to be surrounded by a horde of followers who all vied with one another in doing nothing in particular. He has certainly practised as he preached. Modern progresses, even after making all allowances for the convenience of mechanical transport, are in respect of numbers exceedingly modest, and when His Highness goes to Europe he seldom takes with him a staff of more than four or five at the most.

The tour lasted nearly two months, a very long time for any Prince to be on the move practically all through. It was meant for work, real solid useful work, and work it was every day. Records of offices, details of business, inspection of the Police, schools, Public Works, and even village records—all these came under scrutiny, though it was, we may well suppose, rather the eager zeal of the learner than the practised eye of the master which prompted it. The Maharaja with the same object in view conversed with the people, received the leaders of communities, and took counsel with the local officials. It is one of his characteristics, and one that has endeared him to his people, that he is easily accessible to all, and ready to listen to all kinds of complaints and petitions, reasonable and unreasonable. On any of his tours his car may be seen surrounded by a crowd even of the lowest class, who press their humble requests upon him, while his attendants stand aloof, knowing better than to interfere with the people.

This characteristic has not been without its effect in Baroda. The Maharaja has never scrupled to get together the best officers he can lay his hands on, no matter where they come from, and the only limitation to their quality has been the resources of the State. Among the long list of his Dewans are to be found Bengalis, Madrasis, Parsis, Mahomedans, Englishmen—only two or three

have come from Baroda State or the surrounding Gujerat. This cosmopolitan attitude, combined with a certain disdain for antiquated custom and prejudice, has given Baroda State a distinctive character. There is no place in India where intercourse is less restrained by the obstacles of caste. Where there are powerful communities set in opposition there is bound to be a clash of interests. Englishmen who have seen the rise of labour and the revolt of the working classes do not need to be reminded of this. And as in Madras Brahman is set against non-Brahman, in the Punjab Musalman against Hindu, and in Bombay in these later years a species of red socialism is raising its head against the conservative elements, so in Baroda there is a clash of interests between Gujerati and Marathi. But these things work below the surface and to him who keeps aloof they are not readily apparent. The foreigner is accepted at his face value and appraised according to his qualities. He stands or falls according to his own individual merits, and not according to the accident of his birth. If he survives the test, he is received everywhere not only with courtesy—for that experience in India has taught us to expect—but with actual cordiality. Times are changing. It may be that as foreign travel has expanded, intercourse has deepened and broadened all through India, and that in spite of political differences, social relations are closer than they were. That they are what they are in Baroda is—partly at any rate—due to the broad-minded humanity of the Maharaja which first showed itself in this protracted tour.

In March 1884 the Maharaja in pursuance of his policy of getting to know intimately all parts of his dominions went to Navsari, accompanied, as we read with interest, by the Maharani and the infant Prince. This was Fateh Sinh Rao the heir apparent, whose untimely death at the age of 25 was a great sorrow both to the Maharaja and

to all Baroda. He in his turn left behind him two daughters and an infant son, Pratap Sinh Rao, now a youth of 21 and in training to take his grandfather's place when in the course of nature the Maharaja is taken from us. Navsari itself was not unfamiliar to him, but a strenuous tour, when the weather was getting hotter every day, took him into the eastern part of the district, which is covered with hills and jungles and inhabited by the appropriate hill-folk. These timid people fled at first, as soon as His Highness showed his face, but confidence was gradually established when they saw that they had nothing to fear. It is from this tour that dates the establishment of a boarding-school for fifty children for these primitive people, a school which still flourishes and has since expanded. Yet a Maharaja, however benevolent, cannot do everything. The Kaliparaj question—for so these hill-folks are called—is still unsolved. That same want of civilization which left them ignorant of the art of lying, left them also, as it has left others of their kind, a prey to the insidious attractions of liquor. They are ready to sell their souls for a pint, and their particular vice has led them into a species of slavery to the people who supply the drink. It is a phenomenon not peculiar to Baroda. Wherever the aboriginal or primitive tribes come into contact with those on a slightly higher plane of civilization, there assuredly will be found men ready to pander to vicious tastes, to take their land from them by mortgage and sale, and to bring them into the bondage of perpetual debt. If the British Government after taking anxious thought has been able to do very little to help these people in spite of various enactments and regulations, Baroda cannot be blamed for its failure to solve a problem which seems to be insoluble.

For the rest, the tour was taken up with the usual inquiries into the administration. It is, however, notice-

able that a large proportion of a long catalogue is taken up with the needs of the villagers and touches their everyday life. Here it would seem was a new departure. It has often been said that the ryot wants nothing better than to be let alone, and that is quite true if it be taken to mean that he does not like vexatious interference, and does not appreciate to the full the well-meant efforts of a grandmotherly Government. But it is a far cry from vexatious interference to intelligent interest; it is a far cry from a desire to know and understand, to an indifference which looked upon the people as so many cows to be milked as dry as they themselves would permit or stand. The last had hitherto been too largely the practice, and during the minority administration Sir Madhav Rao's hands had been too full to allow him to enter into all the details of village life and to find out just where the shoe pinched.

It will have been noticed that when the Maharaja paid his visit to Ahmedabad in the preceding year Sir Madhav Rao had already left him. The great Minister's task was done. He had purged the State, as far as was possible, of vice and corruption, he had restored justice and security for life and property. He had established a sound financial system and had made a beginning of useful public works. He had placed upon the throne a youth of excellent promise and he had in the first few months after the accession to power seen the first fruits of that promise. He took leave, probably with the intention of not returning; at any rate he did not return. The exact cause of his retirement does not appear, but in 1895 the Maharaja in writing of his Dewans suggests that he left 'not expecting, I suppose, to be entirely satisfied with the course things would take. It is not easy for a man who has ruled a State with supreme authority and stood in fact almost in the position of a Raja to step down to a less commanding

level, where his will would not be so entirely absolute.<sup>1</sup> It may be so and perhaps Sir Madhav Rao chose wisely: sooner or later the clash of masterful wills would have made itself felt. It is no new thing in history, nor is it peculiar to the Princes and their Ministers. At any rate the pilot was dropped; henceforward the captain was in charge of the ship, nor had he reason to complain of his second in command.

## V

But although much excellent work was being done by the Dewan and the officers of the State, it must not be supposed that the Maharaja left all the unobtrusive business of the State to the Dewan while he himself made spectacular tours in the Provinces. Quite the contrary. All the more important reforms, whether inspired by himself or suggested by the Ministers, were ultimately submitted for his decision. The machinery for the disposal of business was improved; a Registration Department was created; a fresh impetus was given to well-sinking, to the importance of which the Maharaja was and still is keenly alive; surveys of roads were begun, for though metalled roads were too costly, at least fair-weather roads, or 'improved cart tracks properly drained' could be made; a new system of Excise was introduced; and an attempt was made to foster industries by the foundation of the Baroda Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mills. Most of these enterprises have come to fruition in course of time, but to lead his subjects into the path of large industries has proved, hitherto, to be beyond the power of the Maharaja. Baroda, in fact, is not suited to this kind of activity: it is an agricultural State and surrounded as it is by British India and in close proximity to such centres of business as Bombay and Ahmedabad,

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, no. 180, p. 138, dated 15.7.1895.

competition is too severe. Many have been the disappointments, many the failures, of this praiseworthy enthusiasm. Enterprises have succeeded, mainly by the efforts and talents of individuals; but the spirit of industry in the larger sense is lacking, and those safeguards by which a nation protects and fosters the industries of its own choosing cannot be applied in the peculiar conditions of Baroda.

Two small points emerge from a survey of the reports of those times, each of them in its own way contrasting with the traditions of the former rule. From the report of 1883-4 we learn that 'lectures on general morality and good conduct are given to the inmates of the Jail generally once a week'.<sup>1</sup> This is a far cry from the practice of those days, not ten years before, when men were thrown into prison and their property confiscated at the whim of the ruler, when men were flogged to death in the streets, secretly poisoned or slowly starved. Here was a ray of hope for the prisoner, and here was a glimpse of that humane treatment of prisoners which began with Sir T. Madhav Rao and has been continued ever since. To-day Baroda Jail can stand the criticism of the most fastidious and can bear comparison with the best-conducted of Indian jails.

And again in the previous year we hear of the establishment of schools for the classes at either end of the social scale. The Sardars were too proud to send their children to the ordinary schools. They were consumed by an exaggerated idea of their own importance, and if they did not quite adopt the attitude of the medieval barons who rather gloried in their own ignorance and despised learning as unfit for the fighting man, they could not condescend to degrade their children by allowing them to mix with others of meaner blood. On the other

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda State Administration Report*, 1883-4, p. 38.

hand, the lowest classes in the State, the Kolis, the Vaghers of Okhamandal, had hitherto been almost neglected; and the lowest classes of all, the Dheds and the Bhangis whose hereditary occupations are, or are thought to be, degrading, had been debarred from the established schools by the operation of the Hindu caste system. It is characteristic of the Maharaja that he should have shown his solicitude for these lowly people; times have changed since then, and India is now asking herself the question whether she is treating those classes quite fairly in refusing them the opportunities which are the right of every citizen, only because in the dim centuries of which no record remains, they were kept apart by the conquering tribes, Aryan or other. But in those days it needed insight, sympathy, and not a little courage to offer education to a class which public opinion would have thought unworthy of such regard.

But the most notable achievement of these early years and the one which gave the Maharaja the greatest pleasure was the turning of the first sod of the Baroda Waterworks. As we have seen, the idea had been in the mind of the Maharaja Khande Rao and various suggestions had been made which, however, all proved to be impracticable. The time passed in investigation and before any decision could be taken the Maharaja died. As the Dewan rather naïvely remarks in true courtier fashion, 'his successor in the short régime that was allowed him scarcely found time to devote himself to the subject',<sup>1</sup> being, it would seem, preoccupied with the charges against him of misgovernment and worse. Sir Madhav Rao, like Maharaja Khande Rao, imported engineers from outside the State, but the problem still defied him.

But in 1884 His Highness, still carrying out his programme of visiting his dominions in detail, made several

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda State Administration Report*, 1884-5, p. 4.

short tours in Baroda District. A journey to Savli, some few miles east of Baroda, and to a neighbouring irrigation tank or reservoir suggested a new line of investigation. An expert Indian engineer was engaged and after casting about in various directions he proposed the scheme which was ultimately adopted and became the Sayaji Sarovar, the large reservoir about thirteen miles away, which, complete with all the details of modern scientific waterworks, now supplies Baroda City.

The Maharaja exulted in the solution of this vexed problem; Baroda had long been crying out for a supply of good water, and now at last it seemed that she would get it. The water-supply of a great city is no mean undertaking even now; in those earlier days it was something to be proud of, and the Maharaja spoke no more than the literal truth when in the course of the speech he described it as 'the greatest of all the measures I can adopt for the improvement of Baroda'.<sup>1</sup> We may be sure that it was in the spirit of no empty compliment that General Watson, the Agent to the Governor-General, whose wife actually turned the first sod, offered the congratulations of the British Government upon a scheme so obviously designed for the welfare of the people. Of the promises made or the hopes expressed on that memorable occasion some have been fulfilled and some not. The Maharaja has not made of Baroda a commercial centre and, to do him justice, he never expected to; but even that modest programme on which he allowed his mind to play has hardly come to pass in forty years. Baroda is still without a complete and adequate drainage system. That will come; and it will come the sooner when her people will have realized to the full the value of public health. But His

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda State Administration Report*, 1886-7, p. 6. In this speech delivered at the formal inauguration of the waterworks His Highness called them 'the most important single public work brought to completion since my accession to power'. (*Speeches and Addresses*, vol. i, p. 29.)



Highness has entirely fulfilled his determination to improve the place, to make 'its markets and main streets broad and pleasant', to give it spacious public buildings, and to endow it with 'numerous and easy approaches from the surrounding country'.<sup>1</sup>

At the close of 1886 another important work was finished, destined to be second only, if second, in importance to the waterworks. The Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, being on a visit to Baroda, was invited by the Maharaja to open the State General Hospital which took the place of the much more modest affair set up by Sir T. Madhav Rao. The 'Countess of Dufferin Hospital', as it is officially called, but more familiarly the State General Hospital, is one of the best of its kind in Western, if not in all, India. The wisdom of the Maharaja has equipped it not only with the latest devices of science for the prevention and cure of disease, but with a highly trained staff, many of whom owing to that same foresight have taken European degrees. In 1927-8 nearly 3,500 in-patients and upwards of 40,000 out-patients were treated, and the number of major operations alone was over 600. The Maharaja is well served. His surgeons and physicians have alike won the confidence of the people, and that in India is no small achievement. The Hospital is in fact the pride of Baroda. Both in its outward appearance and in the work it is doing it is an institution of which any city of equal size may justly be proud. Since that day when Lord Dufferin declared it open, it has seen many changes, much expansion and many additions, and it is due to the watchfulness of the State Government and the Ministers that the finances have all along been able easily to bear the extra strain.

An enthusiastic biographer may be accused of partiality. We shall see later that some of His Highness' schemes

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda State Administration Report*, 1884-5, p. 6.

have miscarried, some were conceived in too optimistic a vein, some perhaps without the necessary vision. This is what the Viceroy had to say on the occasion of this the first visit of any Viceroy to Baroda :

‘Although Your Highness, with a modesty which well characterizes you, has passed in a very light manner over many excellent works of a similar nature which have been constructed under your auspices, all who are inhabitants of this place know that, thanks to the intelligent energy which is being exhibited by their Ruler, few cities and few States have ever made greater progress in everything which tends to ameliorate the social condition of their inhabitants than the city and State over which Your Highness so auspiciously and benevolently rules.’<sup>1</sup>

Compliments were no doubt flying about in plenty. One does not take at their face value all the nice things that are said on ceremonial occasions. But, after all, a compliment which is manifestly untrue is no compliment at all, and those who have to make complimentary speeches fasten upon what can be said in praise of host or guest without fear of flat contradiction, even if the phrases used be a little exaggerated. And as if he had not said enough, Lord Dufferin at the subsequent banquet added :

‘When I found Your Highness surrounded by a happy and contented population whose prosperity and personal affection to Your Highness it was impossible to mistake or misapprehend, I then indeed felt fully confirmed in that opinion which I had already been led to entertain of Your Highness, and I go away convinced that in Your Highness, India is blessed with one of those wise, high-minded and conscientious members (*sic*)<sup>2</sup> whose life is a blessing to their people and whose co-operation with the Government of India is more calculated than anything else to further the happiness of Her Majesty’s

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda Gazetteer*, vol. i, p. 614.

<sup>2</sup> So it is printed. The word used was probably ‘rulers’.

Indian subjects and to assist us in the performance of our own onerous and grave duties.’<sup>1</sup>

Evidently the sky was clear; the barometer was steady at set fair.

## VI

Meanwhile the general administration pursued its placid way. There was still a great deal to be done, and the voluminous reports of the Dewan show that, if in these early years there was not a great deal of innovation, there was at any rate steady progress. The accounts had been in such dire confusion that a great deal of hard and unassuming work had been required to get them into something like order. The arrears of land-revenue of former years stood at the astounding figure of nearly 67 lakhs or about £450,000, an enormous amount when we consider that the whole land-revenue of the State was just about a crore.<sup>2</sup> The Minister quietly remarks that the balances varied from time to time because the work of adjustment was going on, and those who know anything of State accounts and their complications will realize the huge task of adjusting, reconciling, and correcting the accumulations of years. So difficult was it that a special staff had to be engaged by the special directions of the Maharaja. The year 1884, however, saw a decided step forward. When the Maharaja had assumed power, there was nothing left for Mr. Elliot to do. He stayed on for a month or so to do some small special work and then left. But the Maharaja was very loath to part with his old friend. The survey and settlement of the State was urgent, for upon it depended not only the assurance of the revenue but also the prosperity of the ryots, since it is imperative that the State should know how much to

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda State Administration Report*, 1886-7, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> A crore is 100 lakhs.

expect and the ryot how much to pay. Accordingly a new department was created and Mr. Elliot was invited to take charge of it. Some kind of rough survey and settlement had been carried out by Maharaja Khande Rao but it was imperfect and incomplete, and, worst of all, no care had been taken to preserve the results. Now for the first time a survey and settlement was made upon scientific lines, and the work done by Mr. Elliot remains as the basis of subsequent settlements, though of course there have been many changes, some of them radical, since his time. It is to Mr. Elliot also that the State owes the settlement of the alienated lands. Into the details of this peculiarly uninteresting and complicated subject there is no need to enter. It must suffice to explain that there are in India many strange tenures, created on various pretexts by former Governments and now continued to the descendants of the grantees. Some of these were gifts to favourites, some were religious grants, others again were given for prayers for the prosperity of the Raja, yet others for definite service to be rendered. Some paid nothing, others were held on favourable rent. It was therefore necessary to see that the succession was regulated, that the service was actually rendered, and, above all, that those into whose possession they had come by purchase or otherwise, but who had no connexion with the original family or the purpose for which the grants were made, should not enjoy these special concessions.

Blue books, by whatever name they may be called, make very dull reading. Yet the record of his administration is the record of the very life of the man himself. Even in those early years which I have called the years of probation, the work of the State was the Maharaja's preoccupation. State visits to Calcutta and elsewhere, tiger hunting, even the long and energetic rides—which once at least ended fatally for the horse—these were but the trappings

and relaxations of a busy life. There was nothing here of the piquancy of Parliamentary tactics—of that manœuvring to jockey the other party out of power, of the excitement of elections, of great speeches taking a popular assembly by storm, of intimate conversations between the leaders. What earnest discussions the young Maharaja may have had with his experienced Ministers, what suggestions were made to him, what differences may have arisen on matters of high moment, we do not know now. The years between 1881 and 1886 have come down to us in somewhat shadowy outline from which stand out a few definite events. They were years of consolidation of what had already been achieved; there was expansion too on the lines contemplated in the minority, and there were changes because nothing stands still. Perhaps, as His Highness hinted, these changes were not always to the liking of those who had gone before and who still remained with him; yet they were not made hastily or arbitrarily but only after the conviction that comes from personal contact and personal inquiry.

Yet in some sense these shadowy years were crucial. It was then that the Maharaja developed that passion for system and principle which was to be in after years the rule of his life—a rule, some might say, carried to excess. For everything was and is governed by rules and regulations, and, as the Maharaja has himself said, the Government got on better without so many. In the earnest desire to see that all things are well ordered, rules were laid down either by him or by his Government with such meticulous care that little or nothing was left to discretion and his officers tended to lose initiative and hesitated to take responsibility. No words are more frequent upon his lips than ‘principle’ and ‘common sense’. He delights to search for and to lay down the principle which is involved in every isolated decision, and he hates above

everything the sacrifice of common sense to the slavish following of a rule. There is a story that walking once in the sun and wanting an umbrella, but being unable to speak owing to a sore throat he made signs to an attendant, who rushed back to the Palace and produced a gun! That did not matter much. But when officers do similar foolish things under the shelter of the letter of a rule, he is irritated beyond measure. 'Be sensible', 'use your common sense', this is the burden of the advice; yet the habit which has grown up from a vast array of rules to be obeyed and from what seems to have been an over-centralization of power is difficult to shake off.

Criticism of this kind does not imply censure. In a system of autocratic rule where Ministers and other officers had long been accustomed to look to the Maharaja for orders which they regarded as final and irrevocable, or only to be altered at the initiative of the autocrat, it was perhaps inevitable that all responsibility should be thrown upon him. Even now it is not uncommon to hear it said that such and such is the Huzur Order which, right or wrong, has to be obeyed. Yet no one has shown more reasonableness than the Maharaja. He is always ready to be convinced, and, if he is convinced, to alter his orders; in fact he expects his Ministers to correct him or to point out how things could be improved; for they are men of experience and are in closer touch than he with the details of administration. Moreover the discovery that his lower officers sometimes did foolish things left him very reluctant to give them the chance. And so, just as at first he was called upon to decide such trivialities as the charge for candles required for an elephant ride to the Residency, even now his Council is called upon to deal with matters which in the neighbouring British territory would hardly be thought worthy of the District Officer.

The march of events, the system of Government,

the Maharaja's own early training—all these and much more have brought about what is good and what is not so good in the administration of Baroda. Those early years set him upon a path which he could not afterwards have left, even if he would. It cannot be laid to his blame if he did not foresee all the reactions which his measures would have upon so complex a thing as human nature.

## Chapter Four

### DOMESTIC LIFE—EUROPE

ON the 7th May 1885 the Maharani Chimna Bai died. She had recently given birth to a second daughter who died in infancy and she never recovered from the confinement. The Maharaja had been much attached to her and felt her loss deeply. Not long afterwards when laying the foundation-stone of the market in Baroda, he referred to her as 'the mild, charitable and amiable woman, the devoted mother and the loving wife'.<sup>1</sup> The market was to have been dedicated to her, but when completed it was found to be too large for the purpose, and was converted into the Nyaya Mandir, the Temple of Justice, which is in more prosaic English phrase the Law Courts. It is not known by the name of the Maharani, but in the large entrance hall there is a statue of her which bears silent testimony to the wishes of her husband.

This, the first of a series of domestic sorrows, fell upon the Maharaja while he was still a young man. The shock seemed to have told severely upon his health, which was already overtaxed by the cares of administration and the amount of energy which he threw into the work. Although he had to some extent organized the work so that he might be relieved of what was entirely petty and beneath his notice and might work upon a more systematic plan, there was as yet nothing like a Council with executive powers by whom the bulk of administration could be carried on without reference to His Highness. The Dewan was the Minister and was practically the sole officer responsible to the Maharaja, though others could be called in as a Consultative Council, and Heads of Departments could be summoned to advise upon matters which specially concerned them. It was not until a later

<sup>1</sup> *Ruler of Baroda*, by Sergeant, p. 75, footnote.



period that the powers of each grade in the administration were defined, and the amount of work which devolved upon a conscientious and energetic Prince must have been enormous. It would of course be very unfair to accuse the Maharaja of all the shortcomings of the State, as it would be equally unfair to attribute to him alone all its successes. Much depended for good or ill upon the Dewan, and much inevitably upon the heads of Departments and the staff working under them. The Maharaja was well served. The yearly reports which at the time of his accession to power had been insisted upon by the Government of India and have been continued ever since show that if great improvements and notable landmarks only occur from time to time the administration ran smoothly, the Dewan had no difficulty in driving his team, and the Maharaja had no cause for dissatisfaction.

For all that, personal rule involves a multitude of details and the strain was heavy. It was aggravated by temperament. Sayaji Rao possesses great activity of brain coupled with a certain inability to throw aside, as a book that is finished, a subject on which a final decision has been taken. He deliberates long and anxiously, so that his critics accuse him of irresolution. He will debate a question of first-class importance, perhaps for hours, and come to no decision at the close; returning to the charge some days later, he will again argue at length with the same inconclusive result. In a letter of this period to his Khangī Karbhari, or Comptroller of the Household, he reveals his own character in this aspect of it:

‘Please remember well and follow it also that reforms cannot be done in a hurry, and reforms done in a hurry and haste will never take firm hold. . . . Patience is a great virtue and it should be practised in every mundane affair. . . . We have to take men as they are and deal with them in a prudent and safe manner.

Never be afraid of being late in any undertaking of life, so long as you have it in view.<sup>1</sup>

This extreme activity of brain has never left him. He often shows a disinclination to take up a particular subject and puts aside papers that are awaiting his decision. But all the time the business of the State, it may be matters of high moment, or mere trivialities, general questions or personal, things affecting the Raj or things affecting the Palace, is fermenting in his mind. A chance remark in a paper before the Council will start a train of thought which leads to discussion of matters in no way relevant to the question in hand, and it is perhaps owing to this activity of mind which ranges over the whole Raj that he is impatient of those who confine themselves to the immediate subject and do not see the larger issues which concern the welfare of the people.

Let me illustrate. A question was before the Council of the amount of relief to be given to the people whose winter and most promising crop had been practically killed by a sudden three days' frost. A mention of suspension of fines under the Compulsory Education Act of Baroda—an item which in such circumstances usually passed without comment—stirred new trains of thought. A long and interesting discussion ensued on the results of compulsion, the tendency to lapse into illiteracy, the advantages of village libraries, and the causes of indifference to education in rural parts. Were we not wasting our money and our efforts to no purpose? Should we force the people to continue the education of their children to that point at which it might be hoped it would have struck deep enough to last and not to wither at the first moment of quitting school? This and much more was quite irrelevant to the immediate question; yet it behoved the Maharaja to know and he brushed aside

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 41, p. 31, dated 19.4.1888.

mere questions of relevancy in order to find out as the opportunity occurred.

## II

The loss of his wife seems to have been the climax of the strain imposed upon him by this mental activity. His health broke down. He could not sleep, and no one seemed to know what was the matter with him. On the assumption that he was pining for his wife, he was advised, and he eventually consented, to marry again. The usual search for a suitable bride ended in the choice of Gajra Bai, a princess from the small State of Dewas in Central India and of course a Maratha. She was a girl of 14, and following the custom of the time and the tradition of her family she observed the strictest purdah. When in later years the unlettered girl had become the accomplished lady who still shares the fortunes of the Maharaja, she, like her husband, was impressed by the folly and the drawbacks of the purdah system: 'In the opinion of Her Highness', writes the Maharaja in the *XIXth Century* in 1901, 'the custom of seclusion is bad, but she realizes that no one in India, not even myself, her husband, can at the present time lift up the veil. In fact though women generally, as Her Highness thinks, require more freedom, the men of whom the greater part are uneducated do not favour female freedom or female education.'<sup>1</sup> The idea that women are of no account in India has long passed in the judgement of those who know into the limbo of exploded superstitions. 'Physical seclusion', says Sir Walter Lawrence, 'does not always imply mutual aloofness nor languid lack of interest, and it is possible that the purdah system may quicken the imaginative faculty and stimulate the desire for information

<sup>1</sup> 'My Ways and Days', *XIXth Century* article, Feb. 1901, p. 223.

and knowledge.’<sup>1</sup> It is true that we Europeans can know but little of what goes on behind the veil; yet we who in these latest days have the privileges of meeting charming and well-educated Indian ladies, and of seeing them take their proper part in the social affairs of their country that specially concern them, may be forgiven if we feel that the older India was mistaken in depriving itself of the free and unfettered interchange of ideas between the one sex and the other. To us it seems that the purdah system hung and still hangs over India as a blighting cloud, keeping the women back from their proper share in the national life, making them more or less the animal playthings rather than the helpmeets of the men, divorcing husband and wife intellectually, and finally contributing to the secret intrigue which, as the rhyme tells us, is the special business supplied by Satan for the idle.

The Maharaja has himself left some rather incoherent notes on the subject with which he beguiled the tedious hours of a sea voyage, either to crystallize his ideas or, perhaps, with a view to working them up into something more substantial. He has very little good to say of the purdah system. It was, he points out, not a Hindu custom, as ancient writings and tradition show, but was adopted from the Mahomedans at a time when wars and tumults gave it some apparent justification, not only for preserving the honour of the husband but in the interests of the women themselves. But if the wife is to fulfil her part of helpmeet to her husband, if she is to share his private and public pains and pleasures, the practice of seclusion, cutting the family life in two, so that neither knows the friends of the other, prevents the development of that regard by which alone the unity of interests can be brought about. The younger generation must suffer, for if it be true that ‘les races se féminisent’, the secluded

<sup>1</sup> *The India We Served*, p. 139.

mother with no knowledge of the world cannot influence her sons in the way that she ought; the want, moreover, of fresh air and exercise tells upon the health of the woman and indirectly upon that of her children. The custom, he thought, was unnatural. No male of any species, nor even of mankind elsewhere than in Islamic countries, has refused the female the enjoyment of a reasonable freedom. 'I should reduce', he concludes, 'the purdah system gradually till women are able to understand the change and know how to behave and treat others.'<sup>1</sup>

The Maharani then, whatever she may have thought, if at that time she thought at all and was not simply guided by the wishes of her parents and of those about her, was obliged to acquiesce. Even when emergence from this kind of prison came to her as a welcome relief, it was probably hard to break with the accepted custom. Not until 1914 did she dare to appear publicly in Baroda. It is easy for us Europeans to scoff at such institutions as the purdah; to the woman who has been brought up to them and has known nothing else it is probably as hard to appear in public before male eyes as it would be for one of us to walk down Piccadilly in a loin-cloth.

Marriage did not cure the Maharaja. For some three years he wandered about in search of health and especially of sleep. He complains pathetically: 'My doctors, officers, and friends not only did not notice that I was suffering but were rather inclined to scoff at my illness.'<sup>2</sup> He himself was aware that he was a glutton for work and that it was this ravenous appetite which more than anything else was telling upon him. Thus, writing in October 1886, he says: 'There is nothing wrong in particular with me and I sleep better than I used to, but what I feel is the

<sup>1</sup> MS. notes by His Highness.

<sup>2</sup> 'My Ways and Days', *XIXth Century*, Feb. 1901, p. 215.

after effect of hard work that I took arduously at first start.’<sup>1</sup> In January 1887 he talks of going to Colombo on a sea voyage because ‘of late . . . I have not been able to keep such good health as I consider necessary for a man in my position’; <sup>2</sup> and again in March he explains to the Maharaja of Dhar that he went to Colombo and Mahableshwar, as he said, ‘more for the sake of rest from work than for the sake of my health’.<sup>3</sup> People would talk and ‘discuss my health because that is the only way they can account for my going about’.<sup>4</sup> If you live in a high light you must expect people to discuss even your private and trivial concerns, which, because you are what you are, are at once magnified. But in a letter to his brother he is more frank:

‘I am at present staying at Mahableshwar and let us see what good it will do to my health. I am not suffering from any particular disease but I have lost flesh. . . . I still go on suffering from sleepless nights, though, by God’s grace, the attacks are few and comparatively less severe.’ <sup>5</sup>

But he foreshadows the first European tour, to which he looked forward eagerly and not without subdued excitement. His constant preoccupation with work was seriously telling upon him, and with some reluctance he resolved to cut himself off from it completely for six months or longer if necessary. Sir William Moore of Bombay had diagnosed neurasthenia and had recommended Europe. And so to Europe the Maharaja went in the summer of 1887, finding some relief, especially at St. Moritz and the high places of Switzerland.

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 20, p. 15, dated 6.10.1886.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, No. 28, p. 20, dated 16.1.1887.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, No. 36, p. 26, dated 25.5.1887.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, No. 36, p. 27, dated 25.3.1887.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, No. 37, p. 27, dated 11.4.1887.

## III

Apart from what contact with new civilizations, new peoples, and new customs might bring, the decision was momentous. To cross the water was something more than a new experience; it was a deliberate defiance of what caste custom and religious prejudice had decreed. Men were reluctant to go, and not unnaturally, for heavy penalties might be entailed. Sir Walter Lawrence tells of a man, an expert in his own line, who was twice sent to England and each time had to pay a fine on his return, the second heavier than the first. A third time he was asked to go but the terrors of caste ostracism overcame his sense of duty. The case is by no means unique. Those who know India know that these terrors are very real. To be cut off from the intercourse of your fellows, to see your nearest and dearest involved in the same humiliation, to be dragged by scavengers to the burning ground—it takes moral courage of a high order to brave such things as these. The Maharaja is supreme in his own State; he brings whom he likes into the Council and if he chose to import a Hottentot, Baroda would whisper with bated breath and accept the decree. He could do with impunity what others dare not venture, but there was always a chance that another Ambrose would be bold enough to rebuke and even to punish the Indian Theodosius.

And there was a more fantastic difficulty. The people of Baroda, attached as they were to their sovereign and thinking of Europe as a dark unknown place where anything might happen, you never knew what, went in fear that their Maharaja might be kidnapped and kept in confinement or perhaps shipped off to Napoleonic exile. In India, no doubt the English had to behave themselves: there were too few of them. But what might you not expect of a country and a continent where there were no

Brahmans and no temples, and all the people were of that race whereof a few were ruling India? These fears wore off when His Highness returned safe and sound and had no stories to tell of chains and dungeons. Those who shuddered at the thought of the European enterprise were now willing and eager to cross the seas. Servants begged to be taken; to subordinates on meagre pay it was a dream to be realized when the coffers were full. The example of the Maharaja was infectious. It did not perhaps occur to the good folk of Baroda that there are other ways of kidnapping besides the actual confinement of the person. To the Eastern the call of the West may be as enchanting as is to the Western the call of the East. In the years that followed the voice of the West was to call the Maharaja many more times to European shores.

These terrors of anticipation were not translated into realized fact, but the material difficulties of a party who, being in Rome, has not learned to do as the Romans do, did not add to the comfort of European travel. On the steamer they required arrangements for 'purdah' women, the cabins had to be kept rigorously private and inviolate, separate cooking had to be arranged, 'and a hundred and one other things'. This was only the beginning of sorrows. Hotel managers were requested to provide special accommodation for which they 'remembered to make special entries in their bills', which entries the unfortunate officers, knowing nothing of European charges, gazed at in helpless bewilderment. 'The ladies, poor things, when no one was looking, used to jump over the carpets and passage rugs with dishes in their hands, to avoid the pollution which contact with the fabrics would bring about.'<sup>1</sup>

England did its best for them, but the Continent flatly refused to take them in on any terms, pleading that the

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches and Addresses*, vol. ii, p. 372.



smell of the Indian cooking would drive away their custom. And so the party had to rent private houses at great expense. Nor was the trouble over then. Meat had to be killed in a particular way, and certain Indian customs 'offended the susceptibilities of the house owners'.<sup>1</sup> One ingenious gentleman extorted damages from certain stains on the floor which, as it transpired later, were part of his stock in trade, for he had already received damages for the same stains on two previous occasions.

The Indian guests were indeed in the position of the *secutor* around whom the *retiarius* of caste had thrown his entangling net. Whichever way they turned, the net of caste impeded their movements, and it was not very long before they learned that it is impossible to maintain all the rigid restrictions of the caste system while making an extensive tour in Europe. As a Brahman friend once said to me: 'I am a vegetarian: I do not eat meat because I have never been accustomed to it and I do not like it. But I have given way in the matter of eggs. You put eggs into everything and if I draw the line there, I should have very little to eat.' That was the experience of our Indian travellers. They turned and twisted and skipped over the carpets in the hope of preserving caste inviolate. But they soon found that Europe 'put eggs into everything', and they resigned themselves to their fate, not without effect upon the social customs of Baroda.

#### IV

We may leave the Maharaja on his unwonted ship with his face set towards Europe while we glance for a moment at his private life, which he himself has sketched for us.<sup>2</sup> His daily routine was simple for a man in his position. First a bath and private devotions, then a bit of bread and

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches and Addresses*, vol. ii, p. 373.

<sup>2</sup> 'My Ways and Days', *XIXth Century* article, Feb. 1901, p. 215.

a glass of milk in preparation for a ride or drive. He took early to riding—Elliot mentions it as his favourite form of athletic exercise. And in the flower of his manhood he would ride twenty or thirty miles a day. And after the ride, curiously enough, a bit of reading. He was especially partial to philosophy and was fond of comparing Hindu systems with the Greek. And next to philosophy, history. He roamed over India, England, Rome, and Greece with special admiration for Gibbon, of whose great work he even wrote a sort of condensed edition. But he does not seem to have realized—and as history was then regarded it was hardly likely that he should—that the greater part of European history is bound up in the national stories of France, Spain, Germany, and Italy. He varied this with such different authors as de Tocqueville, Mill, Shakespeare, Bentham, and Spencer as sociologist but not as philosopher: apparently poetry and the lighter side of literature did not appeal to him.

Breakfast at 11, taken in company with his children and members of his staff. As he was writing in 1901, it was perhaps due to his travels that the meal was served in European fashion and that some of the dishes were European. And after breakfast he got to work, which lasted till 3 or 4 o'clock and often much later. In those days he seems to have worked on a more systematic plan. Days were fixed for the heads of departments and papers were sent to him two or three days in advance. In civil cases, and sometimes in criminal appeals, he was assisted by a Judicial Committee. Nowadays the procedure has become more elastic. The Judicial Committee has disappeared. Civil and criminal cases are sent up to the Council with the recommendations of the Judges and they are dealt with by the Council much as such appeals are dealt with by the Privy Council in England. The formula is used of recommendations to the Maharaja, but in effect the

decision of the Council is final. The Dewan, the Council or the Heads of Departments are summoned, generally before 10 in the morning, but no one exactly knows when he will be required or for what purpose. His Highness invariably retires for a breakfast or a *déjeuner* on the French model at 12.30. The Dewan is repeatedly called for consultation and often spends the best part of his working day at the Palace. The Maharaja confesses that 'Business has become a passion to me and my work for the people a real pleasure: so I have spent more personal pains than, strictly speaking, I need have done.'<sup>1</sup>

Work over, he went to spend an hour with the Maharani. She was, of course, in strict purdah at the time the sketch was written, though she allowed herself a certain latitude when out of Baroda. Neither he nor she felt that they could flout public opinion in the Capital, and when he went for his evening drive escorted by lancers she walked in the Palace grounds, from which everything male had carefully been excluded. The habits of the Maharaja have tended more and more towards simplicity. In the early days, when he was perhaps dressed by others, he blazed with jewels; now the only ornament he ever wears—and that seldom—is a single row of emeralds, and the utmost variation from his usual quiet suit of silk is a black velvet jacket which he wore at the celebration of his grandson's wedding.<sup>2</sup> The escort of lancers is dropped except on ceremonial occasions; he drove me through the City in a one-horse carriage, himself handling the reins and escorted only by a single attendant on horseback. He very soon cut down the number of his followers in camp

<sup>1</sup> 'My Ways and Days', *XIXth Century* article, Feb. 1901, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> Simplicity of dress is becoming, or has become; the fashion among the Princes of India. On high ceremonial occasions they may perhaps wear some of the fabulous jewels with which they are credited, but at ordinary times the Prince may be the most quietly dressed of the whole company. The Maharaja of Baroda, however, generally dresses simply even when others affect a certain splendour.

and on his journeys. In 1887 he took with him to Europe over fifty people, but in 1894, when he had with him beside the Maharani a suite of only eight, he writes to the Minister :

‘All the members of the party are getting on well. I find them too many. They are most willing to do my work, but have none. As far as my health is concerned, they can do but little good. In time I shall probably reduce the number and the waste of expense.’<sup>1</sup>

And so, after a drive and a light dinner, as Pepys would say, to bed.

The programme was sometimes varied. As his boys grew up they developed a taste for cricket and he would go of an evening and play with them. This mild exercise did him good: ‘I feel so well after a reasonable exercise.’ The whole of the younger generation have shown a great aptitude for English games. Shivaji Rao, the second son by the present Maharani, might have been an Oxford Blue but for an accident, and the others have been no mean performers at cricket and lawn tennis. Her Highness is a devoted adherent of the latter; with a few chosen companions she plays on most evenings when she is in Baroda and has taken the game seriously enough to have had lessons from professionals in England.

Those who imagine that the life of an Indian Prince is made up of Court Ceremonial, of dignified Durbars at which the ruler does summary justice to the various petitioners, of wild extravagances in wine and women, or in the less reprobate hobbies of motor-cars, racehorses, and jewellery, may be surprised at the simplicity of such a life as this. It is not in truth quite the whole of the picture. In England the Maharaja is a private gentleman. That is his own phrase, though doubtless he is treated as something more. In India he is always the Maharaja. He was, one might say, born to be that and nothing else.

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 140, p. 103, dated 28.1.1894.

Always or nearly always, except perhaps in the company of the very few to whom he has given his real friendship, he is surrounded by a ceremonial, or at least an etiquette, which has the inevitable effect of keeping men at a distance. He once said to me, 'Let us go for a walk and be ordinary mortals for a while,' and one feels at a private interview, when he can unbend and be his real self, that the relief is as great to him as to his visitor. Men only approach him in the Palace in their stockinged feet; the almost universal use of pumps is due to the fact that they can easily be kicked off. He is invariably saluted, not with the ordinary salaam which consists of inclining the head and raising the hand to the face, but with the more complicated 'mujra' which involves a lower bow and a waggle of the hand before the face, making as it were three salaams in one.

The Maharaja has himself said that he has never known family life, for even to his children he has been the Maharaja instead of the father. His servants expect it of him; and while all of them, from the Dewan, who to a large extent administers the State in his name, to the humblest menial who carries his shoes and wheels his chair, render him loyal and willing service, there are not more than one or two who can claim to be on terms of easy familiarity with him. You cannot judge by European standards, and the Maharaja must conform to standards which are set not by him but by his own people. But to our thinking it leaves him a lonely figure—all the more lonely because those by whom he is surrounded have not the general knowledge that comes of wide reading and extensive travel, and, now at any rate in his declining years, his conversation dwells too exclusively upon the problems of the State or descends to the trivialities of the moment for want of that stimulus that comes from the intellectual companionship of equal minds.

For all that his is a magnetic personality. Courtesy goes without saying : that he shares with most Indians and especially with those of his own order. But the knowledge of him comes slowly. He has not at first meeting the easy affability of the Jam of Nawanagar, the adored 'Ranji' of the cricket field. Englishmen who have met him in Europe on friendly, if not on easy, terms have been rather surprised at his apparent aloofness and indifference in Baroda, but that is because they have not seen enough of him to understand. Formal visits on business mean very little; one sits at the table discussing the matter in hand and accepts dismissal when that is done. I have never felt any elation at a summons to the Palace, and I have never left His Highness after a private talk without wanting to stay longer. The charm, whatever it is, is indefinable. Those who have crossed swords with him in the political arena and know no more of him than that he is a tough customer to reckon with on that sand, or that, to change the metaphor, he has occasionally been somewhat of a thorn in the side of the Government of India, will have a different tale to tell. They know the Raja, but they do not know the man. His sincerity is evident, but it is sometimes combined with a certain bluntness of diction which scorns diplomatic circumlocutions; and the reserve and caution which play a large part in a complex character have sometimes led to unfavourable impressions by comparison with the more effusive or more acquiescent nature of others.

## V

We have left him on his ship, drawing every day nearer to the unexplored shores of Europe with whatever they might have of enchantment in store for him. Venice was the gateway of Europe to the party, and the day he arrived there might almost be said to be as important in

the annals of Baroda as the 27th May when in 1875 he was installed on the gadi. Few, if any, of the Princes of India have put their travels in Europe to such good account. He was travelling for his health and we need not hesitate to say he was travelling for his pleasure. No American tourist, ravenous for the sights of India at lightning speed, could have looked forward to his trip with greater zest than did the Maharaja, who now for the first time was coming into personal contact with a civilization and a culture familiar as yet to the mind's eye only through the medium of books and such intercourse as he had had with Englishmen in India. But throughout his tours in Europe he has always kept before him the possibility of improvement in the State. Now it would be some special organization, now some particular institution. He would observe carefully the effect in practice of such political theories as local self-government; or he would turn to the social side and compare the marriage customs of Europe with those of India, noting their general effect upon the people. Problems of agriculture, problems of education, of co-operation, of medicine, of culture, were quickened into life in the brain where the germs were already there, or were started suddenly—perhaps unexpectedly—by these new experiences. There are definite institutions in Baroda which owe their inspiration to European travel—the Fine Arts Gallery, and the Library may be named—there are definite objects such as the pictures in the Lakshmi Vilas Palace and the Greek statues in its halls and corridors, the furniture of the rooms, or the easy invalid chair which may have come direct from Carter's. But except for the Library, which was a deliberate attempt to further the cause of education in Baroda and to broaden the minds of his people by inculcating the love of reading and by putting within their reach all that was best in English literature, such things as these were only the

symptoms of the more impalpable influence of Europe upon the administration of the State, upon the social life of the City, and upon the general outlook of the people.

From Venice he went to Milan and northern Italy. Like any other tourist of intelligence, he visited all the usual places of interest, though possibly the visit to the famous glass works at Murano was prompted by the ever-present desire to do something for the State. And so by easy stages into Switzerland. Geneva, Lausanne, Berne had their special interests, but it was at St. Moritz that for a time he found what he had most come to seek. A fairly long stay in those altitudes, which, however, are far exceeded by Simla or Ootacamund, set him up again, and he started for Paris with renewed health and vigour. This was the first European city of first-class importance which he had visited, and he is not the first to have fallen in love with the elegant and brilliant capital. Paris has always attracted him. There he has a house, and there for the most part he makes his headquarters in Europe. Long acquaintance with the place and long intercourse with its people have given him a competent working knowledge of the French language and have made him feel almost as much at home as in his own Baroda. England has never been the favourite, whether on account of the capricious climate, or the official atmosphere from which for an Indian Prince there is no complete escape, or because the temperament of its people is less congenial to the oriental mind. Yet it is to England mainly that he turns for his inspirations, it is to England that he has sent his sons for their education and his many officers for their training, and it is from England that he has borrowed those expressed and implied ideas which have helped to mould modern Baroda. This, of course, is natural enough. Where the surrounding country is under British administration which must, and does, react upon



Baroda, where the laws, the methods, the machinery, have been either borrowed from British India or adapted to the needs of Baroda, and where the language is that taught in all higher educational centres and incredibly acquired by all educated Indians, it would have been incongruous to introduce Paris fashions and French models.

## VI

The Maharaja did not arrive in England until the autumn and made his first bow to that country in Brighton. Oxford, the adorable, naturally claimed him, for his brother Sampat Rao and his nephew Ganpat Rao Gaekwar were then in residence. He reached London in November, where rooms had been taken for him in Victoria Street, and thence he went on 2nd December, accompanied by the Secretary of State, to Windsor to be invested by Her Majesty the Queen-Empress with the insignia of the G.C.S.I. The Maharani went with him and the strangeness of her experience in thus venturing even in a slight degree to break her 'purdah' was matched by the experience of the public at Windsor Station, from which, 'in deference to native custom', all males except those necessarily required for the working of the railway were carefully excluded. This visit to Windsor intensified the devotion which in all his letters he has given to the Queen-Empress, and on Her Majesty's side begot an esteem which lasted to the end of her life.

Of course these early journeys led to no very definite or immediate results. 'I was myself, in those days, very ignorant,' says the Maharaja, 'and my people were more so.' The large number of his retinue, the attempt rigidly to observe all the Indian customs, the desire to have food cooked in the Indian fashion—these and the usual distractions of unaccustomed travellers must have taken up much of the time which might have been more usefully

employed. The Maharaja's first preoccupation was his own health. Europe had been medically prescribed for him and he needed rest—or if not rest, occupation of a very different kind from that which had been his lot in Baroda. But his mind was receptive and naturally observant. Some ideas he had already conceived before he left Baroda. He had tried to overcome those superficialities of the caste system which prevented even men of the same community from dining with one another, but with only partial success :

‘While I attached—and showed I attached—no importance whatsoever to the prejudices I found existing, I was very careful at all times to respect them. . . . To show how far I went in my efforts to remove any possible suspicion as to my motives, I may say that for these dinners separate cooking arrangements were made for different classes, separate tables were provided, and separate service arranged. I even went so far as to have the carpets removed.’<sup>1</sup>

Such views as these—liberal views on the limitations of caste and of the seclusion of women—could not but be strengthened by a visit to Europe. India—and especially Baroda—was ever present to his mind, and as if in answer to critics who complained of an absentee Maharaja bent upon enjoying himself, he declared that, ‘I often dispose of more work when I am out of Baroda than when I am in the State, so, as a matter of fact, my absence in this respect is not a matter of inconvenience.’<sup>2</sup> And in like manner he was adapting what he saw to Indian conditions. He could see that the innocent participation of women in the lives of men induced chivalry, good manners, refinement, courtesy; but he could not approve of certain aspects of feminine liberty which threatened to descend, if they did not actually descend, into licence. Although the Maharaja

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches and Addresses*, vol. ii, p. 370.

<sup>2</sup> ‘My Ways and Days’, *XIXth Century* article, Feb. 1901, p. 222.

has been an unsparing critic of the failings of his countrymen, he has always maintained that there is as good stuff in them as in any one else, if you could only cut away the excrescences which impede progress, learn to profit with discrimination from the example of others, and reach to the standard of education which he found in England. And so in this matter of female education, while he felt that 'an educated lady in the house is more able to shed the rays of enlightenment and true happiness than one who is ignorant and open to the cruel and interested intrigue of her surroundings which have been the great bane of Hindu wealthy families', he thought that caution was necessary, for 'the Eastern standard of female modesty is so high, that where the screen or veil is not used, a reserve which would be shocked by intercourse with strangers is always maintained'.<sup>1</sup> He perhaps hinted, not only that sentiment would be affronted by too violent a change, but also that women, rejoicing in their new-found liberty, might be tempted to descend from that same standard of Eastern modesty. Happily Baroda has so far escaped this danger. There are many ladies whom it is a privilege to know and with whom it is a pleasure to converse.

## VII

But the months were slipping by and for reasons of State he could not prolong his stay in Europe, though he would like to have stayed over the winter. Things were getting on well enough in Baroda, but so long an absence would have been unprecedented. Lord Lansdowne replied to a letter he received from Europe in some perturbation that the Maharaja was already contemplating another flight, and, as we shall see, the Maharaja's anxiety about his health and the Indian Government's nervousness about absentee Princes led in the end to considerable unpleasantness.

<sup>1</sup> 'My Ways and Days', *XIXth Century* article, Feb. 1901, p. 224.

Quite unconscious that any storm was brewing, His Highness speaks of the benefit he has derived from the tour:

‘Anyhow I feel that I did wisely in coming to Europe. So far as my health is concerned, it is such a great change from India that it would be impossible not to benefit by it; the scenery in the country, the pictures and other works of art in the towns, the theatres, cafés and other distractions of Continental life have been a source of great pleasure and amusement to me. It is a great thing to be able to travel as one can here, in comfort and without an army of useless retainers.’<sup>1</sup>

Glimpses, too, we get of what lay upon the Maharaja’s soul and of what was stirring in his mind. The effect of these European tours was cumulative; each was like the other with differences of experience and differences of suggestion. There is surely nothing which frees one’s mind more thoroughly from religious bigotry than repeated contact with other races, other civilizations, and other religions. If religion be a form of worship it cannot matter whether that form be Christian, Mahomedan, or Hindu, and the code of morality inherent in each can be modified to some extent by the observation of other codes. Maharaja Sayaji Rao is a Hindu by profession and by practice. We have already seen how he began his day with private devotions which he himself—writing in 1901, fourteen years after his first visit to England—describes for us in some detail but which it is better that another hand should not repeat, since such devotions are private and therefore sacred to the performer. It was in this spirit that he wrote—on the curious occasion when his nephew, then a schoolboy at Rugby, wrote a surprising letter in which he demanded immediate consent to his conversion to Christianity—‘that every good influence should be brought to bear in the interests of truthfulness,

<sup>1</sup> Fifth trip. Letter to Lord Lansdowne, dated 22.9.1893.

straightforwardness, and all the manly virtues; but this is not to be coloured by any tinge of religious sentiment of a denominational character'. This was characteristic. To him that religion which is most important is the love of one's country. Let a man aim at being a good citizen and the rest will follow: 'if they retain that they will be really good Hindus.'<sup>1</sup> For Hinduism does not consist in essence of the washing of pots and cups, of brazen vessels and of tables, nor in any such outward ceremonial observances. Good men can be found all over the world whatever the religion they profess, and His Highness has not scrupled to attack those institutions which have a religious or semi-religious sanction, yet which seemed to him to be real obstacles to the progress of a nation and to the ideal of good citizenship. The time had not yet arrived for his onslaught upon the customs relating to marriage and widowhood, but in other more gentle and not less impressive ways he sought the good of his people. 'All kinds of contact with Europeans', he declares, 'are of great importance for the purposes of India. To prevent such intercourse is . . . to retard the progress of that country.'<sup>2</sup> These were not idle words. As the journeys to Europe became more frequent, his own servants became more eager to go with him. Caste—or rather the outward manifestations of it—became in consequence relaxed. Fines were less and less demanded for the outrage to caste traditions. And though the practice of dining together was still forbidden by public opinion, he had hopes, that if it were cautiously introduced, the experiment would ultimately be successful.

These hopes have been realized to the full in Baroda. Caste meets caste, and race race, freely and without reservation at the dinner-table. Nobody cares. Brahman and Sudra, European, Mahomedan, those who eat meat and

<sup>1</sup> 'My Ways and Days', *XIXth Century* article, Feb. 1901.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

those who do not—each chooses his friend by whom he will sit, without scruple of custom. It may be that Baroda has never been so strict as the south, where caste is at its strongest, but nowhere can there be more complete abandonment of those rigid restrictions which were impassable when first I saw India. Times have changed. Travel abroad with all that it involves has become so frequent that any attempt to enforce caste restrictions—at any rate among the educated—is bound to fail. All over India, where racial prejudice has strengthened, individual intercourse has, somewhat paradoxically, strengthened likewise. Times have so changed that it is difficult to appreciate to what an extent the Maharaja was ahead of his age. Even in 1901 he only contemplates a cautious advance, and he adds shrewdly:

‘Ten years ago I could not have taken the steps I now do without seriously incurring criticism. Such even a Ruling Prince may have to encounter when he offends against local prejudices; but it depends very much upon the character of the Ruler and the extent to which he really leads his people and how much he is allowed to lead.’<sup>1</sup>

### VIII

In other respects also the Maharaja turned his European travels to the benefit of Baroda. In Europe he seems to have conceived the idea of free and compulsory education ‘permeating throughout all classes of the community’, and strongly approved the system of local self-government which he thought ‘resembled in its essential features the old Indian system founded upon the village community as a basis’. Baroda State was the pioneer in India of free and compulsory education. Unfortunately, though money has been lavished and even poured out, so far as the resources of the State can afford it, upon education,

<sup>1</sup> ‘My Ways and Days’, *XIXth Century* article, Feb. 1901.

the results have not come up to expectation. The idea that the village schools should be the centres of all beneficent activities in the village, and that the people should regard it as part of the life of the village, was excellent in theory but difficult to achieve in practice. Villages have their own ideas. If you must educate your children, well, you must; but you need not do so any further than you are compelled, and you need not remember what you have been taught any longer than you want to.

The success of self-government equally depends upon the spirit in which it is worked and on the co-operation of the people. Here too it has not been thought desirable to go very far. The true civic spirit which is the main-spring of self-government is a long time in coming, and the Maharaja is not going to be hurried into hasty measures. Clamour is rising in Baroda State as in British India, and a weaker man in whom resided the fullest power might have given way to it. The Maharaja is biding his time; his enthusiasms are magnificent. We cannot but sympathize if the vision splendid has not altogether come true. Some day perhaps it will.

But the sky was not unclouded. The Maharaja has a very keen sense of his position as an independent ruler; he is not unaware that if the foundations were laid by others, he has raised Baroda to such a position that for a long time she has been regarded as the example to all other Princes, and that she still shares with a few others an outstanding reputation for good government. It was therefore with more than usual impatience that, at the behest of the Government of India, he allowed the British Resident to intervene in the internal affairs of the State.

The British Resident is a political officer accredited to the court of an Indian State in much the same way as an Ambassador is accredited to a foreign court, but with an important difference. For whereas the Ambassador only

represents his country, which is in no way concerned with the internal arrangements of the foreign country to which he is sent, except in so far as those arrangements may react upon his own country, the Resident is the representative of the Paramount Power and therefore ultimately of the King-Emperor. The Government of India has assumed the responsibility for the welfare of all the peoples of India, including the subjects of the Indian States, and the Resident is their Agent to discharge this responsibility, to report to them, and to advise the Prince if need be. Relations with other States or with the Government of India fall naturally within the duties of the Resident: they are his primary and constant concern. But it rests with the individual to decide to what extent interference is called for, and that may differ from the everlasting intervention of a Colonel Phayre to the watching brief of latter-day Residents.

The Maharaja complains of this kind of interference. During the greater part of his reign, when he left India, he had to make over certain powers to the Resident. Writing on this point, he said:

‘And the effects of my absences are determined very much by the characteristics of this officer; but it may be generally stated that the result of my being away is to make his intervention in the administration more frequent and more felt. The result of this external and, I might almost say, needless intervention is that it multiplies and accentuates the slight inconveniences of my absence into serious difficulties and creates new ones. Uncertainty and want of confidence in the indigenous Government is promoted. The influence of the Raja, which is indispensable for the individualities of the State, is thereby impaired. The ruler being discouraged slackens his interest in the continuity of his own policy.

India is said to be a land of anomalies, inconsistencies, and surprises. There may be some exceptions to this. However,



nowhere is the truth of the remark more forcibly brought home than in the dealings of the British Government with Native States.<sup>1</sup>

These are plain words, unpalatable to those who regard the Government of India as the embodiment of wisdom. But when the point of view is changed and things are regarded from the standpoint of the Indian States, it is more apparent to what extent the best intentions of the Government of India may have irked a ruler who had modelled his State upon British India and was genuinely trying to do his best by his people. The last part of the quotation is cryptic but the tone is clear enough.

There were Residents and Residents. In May 1886 His Highness was staying at Umrath, a seaside resort in the State where he has a house. He proposed to return to Baroda for his accession-day and the Resident seems to have reminded him that the 24th May, only three days earlier, was Her Majesty's birthday. He was piqued and even hurt by the insinuation. He wrote indignantly to the Minister, Kazi Shahabuddin:

'I never dreamt of going to Baroda to celebrate my accession-day and be absent on the birthday of Her Majesty. The dates are indeed so close that it would certainly give room to people to talk, and besides what would I gain by doing so? To make invidious distinction is, I may tell, against my grain, if I may do so. I hope you have explained this to ——. If you have failed to do so, which is not likely to be the case, please take an opportunity of telling him, because he must not be apt to believe that I am capable of entertaining such absurd and low ideas. I am always ready to do honour to the Empress, because it is quite proper to do so and it is one's duty.'<sup>2</sup>

The letter has been given in full because it illustrates the kind of matter in which a certain type of Resident

<sup>1</sup> 'My Ways and Days', *XIXth Century* article, Feb. 1901.

<sup>2</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 12, p. 9, dated 20.5.1886.

thought it wise to intervene, and because in later years the Maharaja fell under the suspicion of disloyalty. That belongs to another chapter of his life, but it may be said that he always had the liveliest admiration for Queen Victoria. It is clear that he did not like this particular Resident and was very glad when he was transferred. The new Resident, however, did not stay long, and in January 1889 we find the Maharaja bidding him farewell in very cordial terms.

The remarks quoted above from the article in the *XIXth Century* are the deliberate summing up of a long controversy which indeed extended beyond that period. The struggle of the Maharaja to assert his right to complete freedom of action, and to administer his State through the medium of his own officers, was too important to be thus lightly dismissed. It is by no means unlikely that it had an important bearing on his relations with the Government of India in other matters than the immediate question.

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## Chapter Five

### IMPRESSIONS OF EUROPE

BUT besides obtaining material for the general improvement of Baroda the Maharaja made good use of his time in seeing all that there was to see in the places he visited; with astonishing activity he travelled from place to place and from country to country. Italy, France, Switzerland, England and Scotland, Austria, Germany, Norway, Turkey, and Egypt were all included in those early tours, and he turned the critical eye of a cultured man upon the most famous monuments of Europe. Naples he found 'one of the most beautiful of all the beautiful places of the earth . . . a thing to see and not to describe'.<sup>1</sup> The town itself was to him, as to others, unattractive, only relieved from mediocrity by the incomparable Museum, for which the Neapolitans have to thank the ancient Romans and the catastrophe of A.D. 70. To the Indian eye, however, the images and pictures of Christ and the Virgin with their attendant lamps and flowers were strongly reminiscent of India, and even the harbour reminded the Maharaja—rather strangely—of Bombay on the Malabar Hill side. He found Indian details also at Pompeii, 'especially the narrowness of the streets not to be found in any modern European city of the same rank, Venice excepted';<sup>2</sup> the houses too with their barred windows and square central courts 'have a strange family likeness to the true type of Indian house'.<sup>2</sup> So enterprising a traveller of course visited Vesuvius and Capri, but found nothing there that is not well known to all tourists.

Rome had a special interest for the Maharaja, in that he had studied Gibbon with great attention and shortly afterwards published a volume on the Decline and Fall.

<sup>1</sup> *Early Trips*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

This work which purports to be Notes is, in fact, with the exception of the first few chapters, a compressed compendium, often betraying in the phraseology the unmistakable style of the great historian. But whatever be the literary merits of the volume, the very fact that he took the trouble to write it in the midst of his preoccupation with State affairs is evidence of the keen interest he took in the downfall of the greatest empire of antiquity. The Maharaja has an eye for architecture and for the harmonies of construction. To him the great Piazza outside St. Peter's was 'immense, majestic'; but 'in front of St. Peter's it is out of place, it impairs instead of confirming the effect of the church'. The interior was impressive and the nave he noticed was profusely ornamented, 'but the effect is spoiled by the profusion'. He could, as a Hindu, describe the reredos as 'ugly', an opinion which will probably be shared by most impartial people, Protestants and Catholics alike.

There was, as there usually is, a service going on, and the Maharaja's thoughts turned at once to India. 'But for dress and locality they might have been Brahmins reciting the Vedas. It was the same measured chant, the same alternation of reciters, and also the same overfed physique.'<sup>1</sup> He might have added, if he had been philosophically or pugnaciously inclined, that there was the same adoration of images which missionaries so scathingly condemn in the Hindu; and if he had been able to probe a little deeper into Italian life, might he not have found too the same superstition? Visits to various other well-known places followed, and on the Pincio he had his first experience of the Battle of Flowers, an institution with which he was later to be familiar on the French Riviera.

He had, on the whole, a poor opinion of modern

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

Rome. The Pantheon, 'the most perfectly beautiful building in Rome',<sup>1</sup> was not only shut in by mean houses but had received from the hands of 'some humorous modern, probably a Pope . . . absurd belfries on either side of the front which have a most ridiculous appearance'.<sup>1</sup> The arch of Constantine was not up to the standard of that of Titus but is 'still distinguished by surpassing grandeur, great harmony and surprising richness of decoration'.<sup>2</sup> Had he forgotten, or did he not then know, that Gibbon had described this same arch as a 'melancholy proof of the decline of the arts and a singular testimony of the meanest vanity'?

Curiously enough he had little to say about Florence, the brightest gem in the Italian Crown. Giotto's Campanile is 'exquisite', *sans phrases*, and Ghiberti's doors show 'an almost Oriental skill in minute decoration'.<sup>3</sup> Michelangelo, who is almost the patron saint of Florence, is not so much as mentioned. The gifts of nature as improved by man, the exquisite surroundings, and the public parks appealed to him here far more than the creations of man. Was it that his mind was not attuned to European ideas of sculpture and painting, that he passed by the greatest masterpieces of Italy, the cradle of art, without a word?

Thence via Bologna and Milan to the Italian lakes, where 'all the charms of Italy are congregated'.<sup>4</sup> The artificiality of Italian gardening was not displeasing, though it was 'all of a manner and a convention, as indeed every art must be, and if it realizes beauty and gives pleasure in its kind, it is superfluous to ask whether that kind is legitimate'.<sup>4</sup> At Pallanza the Maharaja again observed a likeness to Indian customs. He found the dead being carried to their last resting-place to the accom-

<sup>1</sup> *Early Trips*, pp. 12, 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-3.

paniment of loud prayers 'just as the Mahomedans do',<sup>1</sup> while a detail of the Carnival consisted in planting a branch of a tree in the ground and tying it to a pole 'as is done in the Deccan at the festival of the Holi'.<sup>1</sup>

Then came Venice, which the Maharaja had seen when first he set foot in Europe, and after his wanderings through Italy the peculiar character of Venetian art seems forcibly to have struck him. It is not uninteresting to read the impression of one who was thoroughly familiar with the rich and minute decoration so characteristic of India:

'This richness and minuteness of decoration (of St. Mark's) point to a fount of oriental inspiration, and indeed one can hardly fail to be struck in Italy by the frequent recurrence of an imagination having little in common with that pure, chastened and often severe style which is the natural and best expression of the Western spirit. Judging, however, from these Italian examples, one would be led to think that an oriental style must necessarily remain an exotic in Europe; the Western artist seems so often unable to subdue his detail to the general effect, is overmastered by it and fails to compel it to serve and heighten the entire impression of magical grace or of vastness and immensity. Venice especially is always reminding us that it once held the gorgeous East in fee. The air of splendour, magic, brightness that reigns over it, the unstinted expense of gold and marble, the love of bright colours, the crimson, gold, and purple that blaze upon the canvases of its painters are in quite another world from the grey and subdued aesthetics of Europe.'<sup>2</sup>

## II

After a stay at Aix-les-Bains for the 'cure', and at St. Moritz and Lucerne for the air, the party went to Paris, 'the city of cities in the modern world',<sup>3</sup> as the Maharaja

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 22-3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 41-2.

calls it. In many of its public buildings his critical eye detected faults: the building of the Invalides seemed to him to be too small for the dome, and the Madeleine to be less fitted for use as a Christian Church than as a memorial of Austerlitz and Jena and of those who fell there, according to the original intention. The Pantheon, however, and the façade of the Opera he pronounced to be perfect; but it was rather in the ensemble of Paris that he delighted, as 'the expression of a wonderful social civilization created by the most quick, original, and many-sided of modern nations'. The gardens were well kept and abounded everywhere. The general lay-out of the city, the domestic architecture, the bridges, squares, and churches all combined to raise Paris to the first place among European cities—at any rate, among those which the Maharaja has seen. There was, however, a tendency to 'monotony, ostentation, an excessive outwardness in life',<sup>1</sup> but this was counterbalanced by the 'gaiety, splendour, verve, pleasure, the kindly and easy social, out-of-door life, which the French spirit has here carried to perfection'.<sup>1</sup>

No one, we may suppose, goes to London to study architecture in its glory. Most of us would agree with Mr. Bernard Shaw that Cleopatra's Palace could hardly have been so ugly as Buckingham Palace.<sup>2</sup> Except Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, and perhaps the Houses of Parliament, London has little to boast of. And so the Maharaja found. The National Gallery he was by no means alone in condemning, and he found that Trafalgar Square, though well enough as a square, was spoiled by the insignificance (and he might have added the incongruity) of its statues, and by the immense height of Nelson's Column, which made it look 'more like an

<sup>1</sup> *Early Trips*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Caesar and Cleopatra*. First stage direction.

ungainly pole than a noble monument'.<sup>1</sup> Nor was there anything to attract in the British Museum, outwardly at any rate, though the Reading Room 'is the best in the world and the arrangements absolutely faultless'.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps here he found traces of the organizing capacities of the English people, as outwardly he had detected an incapacity for aesthetic expression in modern times. For the true genius of the English people he turned to the parks by means of which the 'English had brought their love of nature and the country-side into the heart of this huge and dingy city'. This love of nature seemed to him irrepressible. Battersea Park, the Green Park, and the Duke of Westminster's Park at Maidenhead—all bore in their own distinctive way the impress of the English characteristics, 'the desire for something like real country and the love of beautiful woodland scenery'.<sup>3</sup> Even at Hampton Court he thought the natural English tendency had overlaid the original French design.

The time in London was otherwise occupied in visits to shops, theatres, and other amusements. At the Lyceum, then in its glory with the twin stars of Irving and Miss Terry, he saw *Henry VIII* and *King Lear*. The 9th November found him in London, and he went to see the Lord Mayor's Show 'with horsemen dressed up to represent musketeers, knights, etc. in a display of extraordinary accoutrements supposed to belong to the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries but rather suggesting a circus'.<sup>4</sup> A visit to the East End revealed to him another side of London 'where the squalor, poverty and crime of London closely packed with an appalling density lives its own individual life apart and away from the quarters of fashion, business, and pleasure'.<sup>5</sup> No doubt he would have found much the same thing, had he cared

<sup>1</sup> *Early Trips*, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.



to look in any other of the larger cities of Europe. A tour through England which took in the Universities and the manufacturing towns gave the Maharaja the chance of contrasting two different aspects of English life. Oxford, of course, charmed him, not merely by the beauty of the buildings, enhanced by the decorations which Nature has contributed, but by the spirit of which they are the expression :

“The Universities of other Nations are mere modern buildings made to order to express scientific and utilitarian schemes of education and situated in great cities where they are hardly noticed. Oxford is a town apart living for its university alone, the slow and natural growth of centuries, the expression of a distinct, older and more romantic idea of culture and the home of a more stately and leisurely school of learning. It seems to live apart from the hurried and rapid march of the modern world : it hears the new ideas from a distance and takes them in slowly and every now and then after long pondering over them in the seclusion of its cloistered colleges . . . reacts upon the modern world, sets before it new and striking presentations of old ideas it had been in haste to forget and sends out influences which vibrate far and wide.”<sup>1</sup>

Oxonians will rejoice to hear that his unbiased mind found Cambridge much inferior in external charm; beautiful as she is, she loses by comparison only with Oxford, whose sister she is though not her peer. The opinion of a foreigner, however distinguished, is not decisive of the long-standing and good-humoured controversy, and Cambridge men, for all that the world may say, will still cling to the cherished theory of the Backs.

Cambridge at any rate must have been a relief from the great smoky city of high chimneys which is called Birmingham. But the Maharaja's keen interest in commerce and industry made him forget the ugly surround-

<sup>1</sup> *Early Trips*, p. 59.

ings in the lessons of national prosperity which it had to teach. Some years afterwards he put these experiences to practical use on a memorable occasion after the great famine of 1899-1900. It was, he told his audience, the prevalence of manufacturing industries which was the secret of European prosperity. Great cities were devoted mainly to some particular industry and it was these industries which had given England her place in the world.<sup>1</sup> What he did not point out—and perhaps the time was not yet—was the degradation of men and women such as he saw in East London, the vicious atmosphere of great cities, and the moral degeneracy which seems inseparable from great assemblages of men.

At Birmingham he saw a cartridge factory—‘where I was shown all the different processes and was especially interested by the testing apparatus’<sup>2</sup>—and the Small Arms and Metal Company, where he watched with equal interest the process of cutting iron by machinery. He was entertained by the Lord Mayor and the Corporation at the New Council rooms.

He then went on to Sheffield, passing by night through the Black Country, whose factory chimneys entertained him with an involuntary display of fireworks. Sheffield was to him intolerable—‘a smokier and fouler-looking city it would be difficult to imagine’.<sup>3</sup> Here, however, he took refuge in Messrs. Cammell Laird’s Steel Works, and various other industries peculiar to the Yorkshire city. The Guild entertained him at Cutlers’ Hall, but it was with something akin to a holiday feeling that he went to Chatsworth over the moors, and then to Welbeck Abbey, where Sherwood Forest showed him all the glories of an English autumn.

Manchester was the next venture, and Manchester does

<sup>1</sup> Speech on Orsang Irrigation Works: *Speeches and Addresses*, vol. i, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Early Trips*, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

not look its best when the skies are grey and the rain is falling: 'the warmth of my reception however made up for the discomfort of the climate'. Liverpool naturally followed, where the Maharaja was greatly impressed by the docks and took the opportunity of going over the *White Star Majestic*, which at that time enjoyed a reputation as the last word in luxury. At Liverpool, where the gigantic arrangements for shipping seemed to defy imitation, he also saw the Museum, the Free Library, and Picture Gallery, three institutions which were afterwards introduced into Baroda, though there is nothing to show that this particular visit either originated or in any way stimulated the idea.

### III

It was on one of these tours that the Maharaja first saw Scotland. He was not greatly impressed by Edinburgh, which 'calls itself the modern Athens and suffers considerably by the comparison';<sup>1</sup> but the haunting beauty of the Scottish lakes called for unstinting admiration:

'Switzerland even in its softest aspects has nothing of this kind. . . . The shores of the Scotch lakes are wide green solitudes where one is alone with nature, scenes not of snow and precipice but of the fine recesses of woods, beautiful islands mirrored in the quiet water, lonely gorges and valleys, filled only with the life of the forests and great hills—green in the sunlight or grey with mist and shower.'<sup>2</sup>

He spent a tranquil month amidst this quiet and 'inexpressible' beauty. It was not as if, as he said of the Prince of Wales's visit in 1875, he had no standards of comparison. He had seen Switzerland, and the Italian lakes; he was enchanted by the lovely panoramas of the Bay of Naples, but nowhere does the true lover of Nature speak more emphatically than in this appreciation of the

<sup>1</sup> *Early Trips*, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Scottish lochs. Visits to Aberdeen, Inverness, Glasgow for its commercial interest, and Staffa and Iona for their romantic interest, brought a fairly comprehensive Scottish tour to an end.

A short visit to Brussels in 1892 gratified the Maharaja's taste for architectural criticism. The Palais de Justice standing perched above the city, and as it were dominating the whole, was impressive by reason of its imposing mass, but the details were disappointing. 'The ground conception . . . is so aimless a variation of an accepted style and obviously an architect's straining for effect as to sin both against simplicity and fitness. Moreover the addition of details with a view to mere vulgar picturesqueness is in so stately a building the reverse of happy.'<sup>1</sup> The Hotel de Ville, however, 'is a very pleasing example of the Gothic style as the Belgians used it'. The visit was taken up with sight-seeing, and the Maharaja had the impression which many others have, that 'in general appearance, style, gaiety, sociability'<sup>2</sup> Brussels is a miniature Paris.

Switzerland the Maharaja has often seen, and the earlier visits were only remarkable from the fact that he saw snow fall for the first time, and from the enormous amount of travelling which he got through. His observations on the scenery, which no doubt had to him the freshness of novelty, are those which any competent and industrious diarist might make, and except for its history and constitution Switzerland does not offer much either to the art critic or to the student. But the range of the Maharaja's travels was astonishing, and it might be said that there is no part of Switzerland that he does not know. St. Moritz and Davos, Grindelwald and Mürren, Interlaken, Zürich, Geneva and Lucerne, all came within his orbit, and he saw, if he did not actually ascend them all, Mont Blanc, the Matterhorn, Monte Rosa, Pilatus, and the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

Breithorn. The last was something of an experience for His Highness. A stony and difficult road and a mile's walk over the snow led to a cottage 'where we stopped for one dreadfully cold night'. Next morning they made the ascent 'through a universal desolation of snow and reached the top at 9.30 a.m.' After an hour's halt to admire the incomparable view they started to descend, but the snow was melting under the sun and they had to walk knee-deep through it to the cottage of the night before. The Maharaja was a young man then—hardly twenty-five years of age—and he was exceedingly active. There was nothing of adventure about the incident, but to walk knee-deep through the snow must have been a novel sensation to one who not long before had seen snow fall for the first time.

From Switzerland into Austria. Innsbrück and Salzburg took the Maharaja to Vienna, but on his first visit to Austria he had halted at Trieste. Curiously enough, the period of his first visit to Europe is singularly barren of letters. He who had so much to say on so many topics seems to have had nothing to say on this momentous journey, unless it be that he was taking a complete rest, or that he felt the futility of describing Europe to men who could have no conception of it. In the later tours he broke slightly through this reticence. Here is his impression of Trieste as given to his Minister Manibhai (19th May 1893) in a letter written from Adelsberg in Carniola:

'As we approached Trieste early in the morning, I went up on the deck to get a view of the country and something struck me as very pleasant. At 5 o'clock in the morning the sun was as high as it is in Baroda in winter at 6.30 but probably not quite so strong. The huge flood of light that fell on the calm and oily waters of the deep was indeed very fine without being unpleasant to the eyes. We could see many a little fishing-boat

with its sail hoisted before. We were near to the harbour. The effect of these sailing craft on the smooth waters was very entertaining. They looked as if they were simply gliding and had no other movement at all. The light of the sun falling on some of the partly red and partly white sails was very effective. The sails looked like a strong fire. . . . The coast was green and wooded, having some villages and well-tiled houses on its bank. . . . Trieste as you come near and get a clear view reminds you more of the Malabar Hill of Bombay.’<sup>1</sup>

He was not, however, greatly impressed by the general conduct of the people in this Italo-Austrian town. To a friend he writes (September 1893):

‘The society in these places is indeed very mixed. You often see many women of questionable repute, who come and enjoy some refreshment with some people who like their society. There were here (in the cafés) nearly 100 people, generally of the middle and lower classes. Cafés are very common in any European town. This is one of the ways in which the people here spend their leisure time. The morals are to be noticed here.’<sup>2</sup>

Vienna, the paradise of musicians, struck the Maharaja chiefly by the ‘pomp and luxury of its architectural style and the gay social life of its people’.<sup>3</sup> In the usual round of sight-seeing so ardent an upholder of books of course included a visit to the Imperial Library, the Viennese character of which is sustained by 20,000 manuscripts and 12,000 volumes of music. But Haydn and Weber, Beethoven, Schubert, and Mozart are not names that appeal to an oriental Prince who has been brought up to a different musical system, and he passes them by to mention Hammer von Purgstall ‘the great Styrian Orientalist and historian of the Ottoman Empire’,<sup>4</sup> of whom it is safe to say very few people out of Austria

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 128, p. 91, dated 19.5.1893.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, No. 134, p. 99, dated 15.9.1893.

<sup>3</sup> *Early Trips*, p. 89.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

have ever heard. At the Opera, however, he went to performances of *Wilhelm Tell* and *Otello*, and 'some excellent play by a Japanese' in a certain café. Two novelties were, somewhat incongruously, 'a boat driven by machinery and a café with a female band'.<sup>1</sup> To Lord Reay he expressed his admiration of the Opera and the Hofburg Theatre, but Baroda and its affairs were on his mind and he quickly drifted off into them. He was never long absent in the spirit from his State. Even an institution so characteristic of continental Europe as the Carnival at Nice reminds him of the Holi festival in Baroda and provokes the melancholy reflection that 'with a kind of Western education our old and popular institutions are being deprived of their life and vitality. Baroda is following the example of other British places and it is to be deplored. It is our right interest to try to preserve our national customs. They have grown by ages and have history in their favour.'<sup>2</sup> Carlsbad and Marienbad were followed by a visit to Munich, which the Maharaja strangely imagined was in Austria. The Bavarian compliment to Munich, which called it the 'German Florence', seemed to him particularly inappropriate, for 'though an excellent Munich it makes a very pinchbeck Florence'.<sup>3</sup> He was, however, not long enough in the place to appreciate the musical and intellectual life of the city, and after such a surfeit of natural scenery and architectural masterpieces as he had seen in this and the preceding trips, the city and environs of Munich must have seemed dull and commonplace. He was about to round off his experiences with some of the grandest scenery that Europe can offer.

<sup>1</sup> *Early Trips*, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 140, p. 102, dated 28.1.1894.

<sup>3</sup> *Early Trips*, p. 92.

## IV

A short stay in Zermatt was merely the prelude to a visit to Norway, on which he had the pleasure of the company of two compatriots, Sir Cowasji and Lady Jehangir. The objective was the midnight sun, a sensation which is hardly worth while going so far to experience; but, like the American who travelled from the States to Darjeeling to see the sun rise on Everest at some fantastic hour, only to find the mountain enveloped in mist, so the Indian party were doomed to disappointment. The sun hid himself in fog, and the only consolation which some at least of the party had was that of being photographed by daylight in the middle of the night. The ship, however, passed the Lofoden islands, 'which seemed to our unaccustomed eyes to be swarming with fishing boats'<sup>1</sup> busy with the trade in cod, and put in at Hammerfest which belied its romantic situation by producing an all-pervading smell of cod-liver oil. The party had gone straight to the North Cape but made a more leisurely return.

Tromsø they found to be a gay, busy place, 'the centre of the autumn herring fishery',<sup>2</sup> where, as the Maharaja must have remarked with satisfaction, English and German are taught. It was here that the party made the acquaintance of the Lapps and their reindeer, which seemed to furnish them with nearly all they wanted—with shoes and belts, with milk and cheese, with articles for trade and with the transport of them. The Lapps themselves were 'small and feeble, not more than 5 feet in height and often less, snub nosed with brown lank hair and pulpy eyelids'.<sup>3</sup> They lived in rude huts and wore peculiar clothes, and they had this advantage over the masses in India, that they had just sufficient education to read and write.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.



The Maharaja might have noted, but did not, the effect which extreme heat and extreme cold have upon the development of a people, for if the Lapps have hardly emerged into a primitive type of culture, they are scarcely inferior to some of the lowest of the Indian community, 'the vast numbers', to use his own words, 'who can hardly be distinguished from brutes'.

To men who had come straight from the Alps, had seen the Scottish lakes, and had wandered through the Austrian Tyrol, the scenery was not very impressive. Yet it had a certain individuality:

'It is indeed these results (the fjords) of the melting of the ice of a glacial era which contribute more than anything else to make the individual charm of this country. Its mountain and glacier scenery though always fine does not rise to grandeur, its cities are of little historic interest. The strangeness and beauty of the fjords coupled with the feeling of remoteness in the far north and nearness to the romance of the Arctic and also certain points of piquant individuality in the land and people, it is those things that the traveller in Norway sees.'<sup>1</sup>

The party then followed the usual tourist route, Molde and Trondhjem, Eide and Odda, and the Stalheim Pass. What seems, however, to have struck them most was the poor quality of the hotels and the general anaemia, particularly among the women. In writing to the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, the Maharaja summed up his impressions of the Norwegian tour:

'I enjoyed my trip to Norway very much: it was a delightful way of beguiling the time gliding through the Fjords whose emerald-green banks were dotted with quaint wooden houses and cleft in many places with beautiful glaciers, some of them stretching right down to the water's edge . . . we went up as far as the horned North Cape but any hopes that we might have entertained of seeing the 'midnight sun' were doomed to dis-

<sup>1</sup> *Early Trips*, p. 97.

appointment; instead of seeing the waves bathed in the soft rays of the sun as it touched them and rose again, we found ourselves in the midst of a drizzle mist, damp and cold. The sailors amused themselves with fishing and the Captain did his best to console us with soup and sandwiches in the Saloon. However, for several nights the light was strong enough to enable one to read one's book without the help of any artificial light and we were amply repaid by the sight of the awe-inspiring weather-beaten rock covered by innumerable patches of lichen of various green tints, and from whose ledges a swarm of screaming gulls can be brought by the firing of a gun: otherwise all was as silent as if we had been "a painted ship upon a painted ocean".<sup>1</sup>

The inhabitants impressed him less than the scenery. Here is the estimate which he gave to Lord Kimberley, the Secretary of State:

'Unfortunately I found that the intelligence and courtesy of the people had been a good deal overrated, and that the amount of information which I obtained hardly compensated for the discomforts of a country which has not yet learned the secret of attracting visitors.'<sup>2</sup>

It was a relief to get back to a more 'advanced civilization in Dresden and Berlin'.

Hamburg was the natural gateway into Germany from a Norwegian port, and there the Maharaja stayed long enough to see the harbour, for the town itself was uninteresting. It was built 'to look just what it is, a comfortable residence for the comfortable traders of an enlightened but not naturally artistic nation'.<sup>3</sup> And this want of art which the Maharaja had seen enough of Europe to detect, even if his own mother wit had not taught him to discriminate, was as conspicuous and far more obtrusive in Berlin than in Hamburg. Berlin he

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Lansdowne, dated 22.9.1893.

<sup>2</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 124, p. 85 (without date), 1892.

<sup>3</sup> *Early Trips*, p. 101.

admitted had, like Vienna, caught something of the Parisian style, but the showiness which was just tolerable in Viennese architecture, degenerated in Berlin into gaudiness. Everything was disfigured by tasteless and unserviceable ornament. Nor did Dresden compare with the splendid cities of France and Italy though it 'makes a very pleasant town'. The Maharaja seems to have lost sight of the fact that the German genius expresses itself in music rather than in the plastic arts, though it is true that Prussia has never produced an artist of any kind—except the Emperor William, whose genius seems to have been of the Neronic type.

It was certainly courting violent contrast to transport oneself from Norway to Constantinople, even with a short spell between of the more 'advanced civilization of Berlin and Dresden'. The place itself has, of course, been extolled for its unrivalled situation ever since the time of its founder, doubtfully called the Great. The Maharaja found there, as others have found, a curious picturesqueness, and felt a disgust born of a too intimate acquaintance with detail, for the streets were 'narrow and steep and excessively dirty',<sup>1</sup> so that the 'discomfort of walking is extreme and it is more usual to ride'.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the architecture was usually beautiful, Justinian's great temple being of course the most prominent example; and even the modern buildings, which had seemed so wanting in most European cities, had been executed with so much care and success as usually to avoid any inharmonious result.

The Maharaja had now done with Europe and concluded his travels by a visit to Egypt *en route* for India. He did not, however, penetrate far into the country and was content with a quite superficial acquaintance with Alexandria and Cairo. He does not appear to have been

<sup>1</sup> *Early Trips*, p. 104.

at any pains to inquire into the history, the economics, the politics, or the social life of the country. It was purely a visit of sight-seeing such as any tourist makes.

## V

Although these early tours had been undertaken mainly for purposes of health and rest in a more congenial climate than Baroda can offer, they had incalculable and impalpable effects upon the social and economic life of Baroda. There is of course no such thing as an autocratic ruler. Just as in ancient India the kings were subject to the will of the people, to use the stock phrase of modern cant, so the Neros and Domitians, enemies of the human race, and in later times the more inoffensive Charles I of England and Nicholas II of Russia, have paid the penalty of their crimes or of the unpopularity of a system. No ruler can do exactly as he likes without the risk of revolution, or at least such an outburst of invective as he dare not face, even when he feels that the measures which he is contemplating are for the ultimate good of his people. If the Maharaja could have abolished the purdah system by a stroke of the pen it would have disappeared long ago, but, as we have seen, he dared not lift the veil even for the emancipation of his own wife. So strong an opponent of caste would have abolished caste by edict, but all Hindu India would have cried shame upon a measure so obviously born before its time. But the ruler, in whom subject to such limitations as these vests absolute authority, and to whom the people confidently look for guidance, can by cautious leading, by reasoned persuasion, and by illustrious example direct the people into the paths which he would have them take. The Maharaja is no theorist; he despises the man who is content with resounding periods and yet flinches when the time comes to put his sentiments to the proof. His

visits to Europe served to fortify ideas that were shaping themselves in his mind and to breed others which he had not yet conceived. A mind such as his perceived the advantages of female freedom and the dangers of female licence, as they were practised in the most advanced countries in the West; he saw, and many times acknowledged, that the wealth, and with the wealth the power, the progress, even the culture of the West, rested largely upon the development of industries; he believed, and clung firmly to the belief, that education alone furnished the solution of the progressive development of a people; he perceived the chances which a measure of self-government afforded for the development of a sense of civic responsibility.

We who have so often talked of and perhaps felt the call of the East have not sufficiently realized that to the oriental mind there may be such a thing as the call of the West. In a speech already quoted the Maharaja reminded his hearers that those were 'great countries in the West with a venerable civilization, many details of which were well worthy of our imitation'. But his advice in those earlier years fell upon deaf ears:

'This in those days all refused to believe: to them it appeared incredible that any country could in any sense be comparable to their own.'<sup>1</sup>

But the Maharaja's example has proved infectious. Not only he, but those who have been with him, have brought back tales of Europe which have made all educated Baroda eager to go there. No doubt there may be some desire to leave the burning sun of an Indian May, under which the senses flag and the brain refuses its function, for the more congenial air of a European summer, but physical comfort does not tell the whole tale. The cleanliness of the towns, where 'refuse is not

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches and Addresses*, vol. ii, p. 373.

thrown on the streets out of house windows', the orderliness of town life and the simplicity of country life, the strong sense of social service, the busy relaxation, the *joie de vivre* which gives up thousands to laughter, careless of what to-morrow may bring—all these and much more reinforce the craving for new sensations, new surroundings, new ideas, and go to make up the call of the West. The Maharaja has been many times to Europe and the effect of his travels is visible to the eye, not merely in the sumptuous appointment of his Palace, but in the uniform of his guards, in the spotless clothing and deferential behaviour of his servants, and the scrupulous neatness of the Palace grounds. Wherever you go in this Indian State, you will find the influence of Europe—from the electric lighting and waterworks of the town to the dress of the men, the village library, and even the humble teapot which village hospitality produces at the—to us—most incongruous hours. Some of these things have come across the border from British India, which itself has adopted them through contact with the Europeans in the larger cities, but some are due to the influence which His Highness has exercised personally and which has largely been coloured by his close contact with the West.

Not that the Maharaja has ceased to be a Hindu. He has sought all his life to eliminate what is base and unprogressive and numbing in the social system of his country, and to preserve what is good and true and just in Hinduism. All that there is of innocent sentiment and historical value in the ancient usages of the Marathas and the Gujeratis he has set himself to preserve. He can play the host with equal courtesy and self-possession at a European banquet or an elephant fight, at a cricket match or a cheetah hunt, and if he has not been able to overcome the prejudices of his people in certain directions

which his European experiences have taught him are harmful, he has at least been working steadily to that end.

Nor have these influences been lost upon his followers. There is a breadth of outlook, a widening of the horizon which is none the less perceptible because it cannot be described in words. Things are seen in a truer perspective. There was a time when all things English were to be extolled merely because they were English; a time has now come when, in the view of certain folk, intoxicated perhaps with the vision of a glorious future, all things English are to be abhorred merely because they are English. Educated Baroda does not fall into these extremes. Many men have seen with their own eyes what is good and what is bad in European civilization and they have shaped their course accordingly.

## *Chapter Six*

### THE MAHARANI AND THE CHILDREN

THAT early visit to Europe in 1887 was fraught with momentous if unobtrusive consequences to Baroda State. It brought the receptive mind of the Maharaja into close contact with fresh ideas and another civilization, and by stimulating the desire to repeat the experiment on easier terms, since the ways were now familiar, it enabled him to examine for himself the good and the bad in Western countries. Object lessons there were in India. Medicine, especially as practised in the great centres, had reached a very high standard, and the feats of engineers were not surpassed, if they were equalled, in Europe. But in 1887 the higher ranks in every profession, except law, were filled by Europeans; the natives of India were not admitted to them and in those days were seemingly content with a subordinate place, so long as they could make a decent living. The Indian schools turned out scores and even hundreds of young men whose abilities and ambitions did not rise beyond the height of Assistant Surgeon, Assistant Engineer, or the higher grades of the Subordinate Revenue Service. You could not in such circumstances and in such an atmosphere expect an Indian State to rise far above the level of surrounding British India; such stars as Sir T. Madhav Rao and Sir Dinkar Rao did not often shine in the Indian firmament. It was true that the Indian States, who were somewhat nervous of introducing too freely the European element, as tending to reduce the administration to a dead level with British India and thus to kill all native originality, were a better school for the enterprising and able Indian, since he had a much wider scope wherein to show of what stuff he was made. But the broad fact remained that Europe was undoubtedly the better training ground,



especially in the field of applied science, and the very fact of association with advanced peoples might be expected to develop the latent abilities of those who knew how to use their opportunities. Although earlier students had gone to Europe, it was from his journeys to Europe that the Maharaja conceived the idea of a regular system. As early as 1892, in a speech at the opening of the Ajwa Waterworks, he alludes to 'our habit of occasionally sending a few selected pupils to Europe', there to receive a generous training. Specially chosen men are now sent at the expense of the State; their expenses are provided for them, not as a free gift but on condition of easy repayment, and of subsequent service to the State. For the Maharaja, thinking first, last, and all the time of the welfare of his State, is not prepared to give something for nothing; the individual student is thus equipped with higher knowledge, which he can afterwards turn to commercial advantage, but the State must have first use of his services. Nor must there be any incentive to idleness. A man is not sent to Europe to enjoy himself at the expense of the State. It depends upon himself to make good, and if he misuses the chances thus generously and courageously offered to him, his blood is upon his own head. The wastrel must be discarded ruthlessly; it may be added that if he is of no use to the State he will probably be of no use to any one else.

So it has come about that one meets all over Baroda State men with European degrees, men who have taken the courses of Oxford or Cambridge, men who have learned medicine in London or Edinburgh, men who have served their agricultural apprenticeship in England or America, and men too from other parts of India who have taken similar degrees and have been brought into the Baroda service. To the European mind there is something particularly congenial in the society of men who

know Berlin as they know Baroda, and to whom Paris is more familiar than Pattan. It is something to be able to turn aside from the narrow horizon of Indian problems and Indian analogies to the wider world, even if such strayings only end in the comparison of impressions of Western countries and Western institutions. It is something to meet men who know the European standards of manners, and whose conception of womanhood has been tempered and modified by European travel. But these things are but the superficial trappings. In the initial stages caste prejudices had to be overcome, and, as we have already seen, that was more than could be done by the *fiat* of an autocratic Ruler. The Maharaja himself made no secret of his latitudinarian views. In replying to an address to the Arya Samaj at Lahore in 1904 he said:

‘Religions may differ in minor points but their ultimate essence and basis is the same. The cardinal principles in all religions are similar: religions differ chiefly in their details. We are all children of the same Almighty Father and inhabitants of the same globe.’

But he had no good word to say for caste.

‘No institution has wrought so much mischief and done such incalculable harm to our country as this unfortunate irrational system of caste. There should be no such rights attaching to mere birth as are associated with it by the caste system. Equality of opportunities must be enjoyed by all classes of people. Social status should not be determined simply by the inseparable accident of birth; lower and poorer classes—lower and poorer not in the religious and the moral scale, but in that of material well-being—should not be debarred from their rights as human beings. It is shameful and disgraceful that the lower castes have fallen largely on account of the selfishness of our ancestors.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches and Addresses*, vol. i, p. 131.

There are many Indians and not a few Englishmen who would challenge this somewhat narrow conception of caste, but we are here concerned not with the intrinsic merits of the Maharaja's views but with the effect they had upon the State. By thus declaring war upon caste, by breaking down the barriers of what may fitly be called caste prejudice (for even the stoutest champions of the deeper influences of the caste system must admit that its outward manifestations carry with them quite unnecessary disabilities), the Maharaja took a long step towards establishing good relations of social intercourse, and of eliminating from the State all that comes from religious bigotry. If the leaders in India could have held the view—strongly maintained and strongly expressed—that 'it is the sign of narrowness of mind to be divided on religious matters', India to-day, in spite of political differences, might have been spared many a humiliating day of riot and bloodshed, which has degraded her in the eyes of others, and has recalled the inglorious days of Christian strife in the capital of the Eastern Emperors.

Both by his resolute determination and by his own personal example, the Maharaja overcame the scruples of the orthodox with the gratifying result that men who at first trembled at the terrifying adventure of a visit to Europe and could not face the consequences of return are now eager to go. They bring back with them not only the knowledge which was the object of their journey, but also minds stocked with new ideas which enable them to compare conditions with those of their own country and give them a fresh outlook, especially upon the material aspect of life.

## II

It was not likely that the Maharaja, who had thus seen the advantages of European travel and European education to the servants of his own choosing, would deny them





HER HIGHNESS MAHARANI CHIMNABAI II  
*Gaekwar C.I., Maharani of Baroda*

to his own family. The Maharani, who had come to him as unlettered as he himself was at the moment of Jamnabai's choice, had, under his inspiration, made considerable progress in her education. In 1899 we find the Maharaja writing to Lady Tweeddale:

'Her Highness is also studying very hard. She is reading with Miss Sorabji, a native Christian lady who is employed in the State and has got into many interesting English novels. What is more, and a very great gift to have, she can remember the stories and turn them to account in conversation.'<sup>1</sup>

She was still far from being the accomplished lady of to-day, the easy and graceful hostess to men and women alike, and the champion of woman's emancipation; but it was at least out of the ordinary that a woman of her high rank and the consort of a Maharaja should have realized the advantages which education brings and should have applied herself to study with such zeal. In 1888 she had borne her husband a son, Prince Jaisinh Rao, on whose birth he not only received the customary congratulations of Lord Dufferin the Viceroy, but was 'very much rejoiced and honoured' by a telegram from Queen Victoria, who inquired after 'Her Highness, the baby, and myself'. This son was followed by another, Prince Shivaji Rao (1890), and a third, Prince Dhairyashil Rao, the youngest of the family, was born in 1893. Princess Indira was the only daughter. Meanwhile Fateh Sinh, the surviving child of the first marriage, was growing up. In 1895 when he was 12 years old he was out riding with the hounds at Ootacamund in company with his little half-brother of 7; and his education under an English tutor, Mr. French, whom the Maharaja had chosen for the purpose, was getting on 'very satisfactorily'. But His Highness very well knew the dangers to which princes in India are

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 400, p. 300, dated 9.5.1899.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, No. 42, p. 33, dated 19.5.1888.

correspondence with brother Princes. The Raja of Dewas was, however, related to him by marriage, and he feels justified therefore in advising him to send his brother to England for higher education—to some public school followed by Oxford or Cambridge. But the most essential thing was to secure a good and sympathetic guardian and a home in healthy surroundings to prevent him from going wrong. It is not without interest also, to note that the Maharaja's idea of the sum required for a boy to live comfortably according to his station in life was Rs. 6,000, or about £400 a year. This was by no means extravagant. The great, perhaps the greatest, temptation which can befall young Indians in Europe is to have too much money to spend, whereby they can indulge in all kinds of luxury, acquire habits of extravagance, and attract other young men whose sole object is to make merry at the expense of their Indian companions.

Prince Fateh Sinh, who had studied for some time for his entrance examination, had already entered Balliol. In a boyish letter to his father he describes his sensations:

"To-day I am rather in a hurry to get off to College now. I am sending down my things now and I will be going there too to get my room in order. I am rather excited about my new life and I hope I shall like it. It is my first experience in managing all things for myself and so I think I am apt to make some funny mistakes, but I will try and see how my other friends manage their things. . . .

Excuse me for not writing a longer letter this mail as I am in a hurry. Please give my love to mother, brothers and sister.' <sup>1</sup>

At first all went well. He rapidly became a favourite with many of his own standing, and the authorities were apparently satisfied with his industry. His popularity was his chief danger; the fear eventually turned out to be well founded that he would be attracted by men with

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished letters.

pleasant gentlemanly manners who did not take life over seriously. The great chance was that he would take to games which for a somewhat indolent habit of body were an excellent tonic, provided that they did not interfere too much with his studies.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately these fair hopes were doomed to disappointment. In May came a letter from Professor Macdonell holding out a warning flag; the young Prince was getting into extravagant habits, and his greatest danger was in self-indulgence: 'Fateh Sinh is very good at resolutions but he finds great difficulty in carrying any of them out.' He would firmly make up his mind to do things which he never did; he would be found loafing in the High instead of working. The end came soon afterwards. The letter was dated May 1902. In August the young Prince was back in India, the authorities at Balliol having advised his withdrawal.

The Maharaja put a brave face upon the failure of his great experiment: 'Fatehsinh Rao is here<sup>2</sup> for a time. He misses his Oxford life. We are all happy to see him back again.'<sup>3</sup> It was no good crying over spilt milk. Now that Europe had proved a broken reed it remained to be seen what India could do for him.

Meanwhile Jai Sinh, the eldest boy of the second family, had gone to Harrow with his cousin Pilaji Rao, who distinguished himself in the athletic line and played racquets for the school. Boy-like, they did not write very long or very informing letters, and the Maharaja complains of it. Curiously enough, perhaps because the boy had shown some taste for music, his father suggests that he had better learn the violin or if he prefers it the piano, but in any case he must not get into expensive habits.<sup>4</sup> He too was

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Mr. Elliot to His Highness, dated Dec. 1901.

<sup>2</sup> Coonoor.

<sup>3</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. ii, No. 654, p. 471, dated 17.8.1902.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii, Nos. 661 and 690, pp. 476 and 497, dated 26.9.1902 and 6.3.1903.



showing signs of extravagance but was as yet too young to give full rein to his tastes. The experience of Fateh Singh was not encouraging, and the second son completed his education at Harvard University in America. The Maharaja had always been impressed by the honourable dignity of labour, and he sought to inculcate it in democratic American conditions. His Highness had by then seen something of the country and had made some friends there, and this was to stand him in good stead, for the importance of some kind of supervision by natives of the country was always present to his mind. To one of these American friends he says:

‘I know so little of American life that I have to trust you and sanction what you propose, fervently hoping that the arrangement will end satisfactorily. . . . I am anxious that Jaisinh Rao should be a success in his own interests as well as in those of the University he belongs to. His failure or success will have a great effect on the progress of the Indian society.’<sup>1</sup>

Jaisinh Rao, moreover, was of a delicate constitution. As a baby he was sickly; as a boy he was constantly falling ill; and although there is no suggestion of any anxiety about his health, his delicacy suggested that a suitable guardian was even more necessary for him than for the robust Shivaji Rao.

The latter had gone through the course of English education at a private school, and later had especially distinguished himself at cricket at Oxford, where he was tried for the University. But of all the sons it was Shivaji Rao who most exemplified the dangers of a foreign education. It was another case of a promising boy gone astray. Writing in great perturbation in 1908 his tutor at Poona said:

‘Shivaji Rao is generally considered to be a very good boy and

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. ii, No. 937, p. 672, dated 28.10.1910.

I am by no means using mere meaningless empty words when I say that I am thoroughly of that opinion. He is at present remarkably free from serious vices: he is healthy in body and has sufficient brains to be used to good purpose if reasonably and considerably moulded.'<sup>1</sup>

But neither in Switzerland, whence disquieting stories had come, nor in Bombay, nor in Poona were the influences surrounding this young Maratha Prince such as could be desired. He was pleasure-loving and disinclined for any serious work, to the extent of cutting lectures freely so that his tutor almost despaired of making any headway. He was then 18, just at that age when habits go so far to form the character. The loss of book-learning, which was implied in his neglect of his work, was of far less consequence than the indication that his will-power was not strong enough to overcome his distaste for work or for serious occupation. It was a warning signal that he might not be able to resist the temptations of the West, where his position, his money, and his taste for cricket were sure to make him the centre of attraction to a class which had little or no incentive to hard work, and which regarded Oxford not as a workshop but as a playground. The inevitable happened. Like his half-brother, he left Oxford under a cloud and returned to India.

These are painful episodes on which the historian would rather not dwell over much. Fateh Singh died of neuritis, from the results of a nervous breakdown, and left behind him an infant son Pratap Singh, the present heir to the State of Baroda. There is great pathos in the Maharaja's letters. He knew well the disadvantages of an over-supply of money to young men, and though there was of course no question that he could have made each of his sons a princely

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished letters.

allowance, he gave them no more than he thought was good for them. No one will question the wisdom of his decision, but to the young men themselves, who knew the family resources, the allowance seemed niggardly. He had cut down the allowance of Prince Jai Singh in America but restored it to the original figure on the young man's representations. At the same time he thought it right to caution his son :

'I have no desire that there should be undue or unhealthy control over you, especially as reports concerning you have always been good, though I think you have learnt to smoke quickly when you ought not to have done so for the sake of your growth. . . . Your poor brother [Fateh Singh], some people say, had too much money to start with and therefore he used it in channels which were not good for him. I do not wish for your sake to commit old mistakes again. . . . I have sent Shirgaokar partly to study and partly to look after you in a friendly way. . . . No number of men can help you to keep straight. Ultimately you must be your own guardian and watch your own interests. What wrong you may now commit in secret will cause you pain later on.'<sup>1</sup>

Everything had been done for the young Princes; all possible precautions had been taken. The Maharaja had sent trusted Indian friends to look after them; he had bespoken the help, willingly given, of English and American friends. He had reduced allowances to the sum necessary for the boys' rank; he had given advice directly and indirectly. The one thing he had failed to realize to the full was that which Lord Melbourne had pointed out in the passage already quoted, that education can only direct, but cannot form, the character. The Maharaja almost acknowledged as much when Shivaji Rao complained to him in 1919 that his guardian's pay was charged to his personal budget. It was pointed out

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished letters, 1908-9, No. 47.

to him that there would have been no need for a guardian but for his own conduct. The boy in whom there was much sterling good, promised to reform, but no time was allowed him to make good his resolutions. In December of the same year—barely eight months later—he went on a visit to Gwalior and on his return to Baroda did not feel in quite his usual health. He took a cold bath, exposed himself after it, and went for a drive. In short, he did everything he should not have done, and when at last the doctor was called he diagnosed pneumonia. He died after a short illness, leaving a widow and three children, of whom the eldest son is now about fifteen years of age.

The bereaved father announced his loss to Lord Reading with studied restraint, but to his Minister he confessed that he was stunned by the news. Thus were two promising young lives thrown away. There was no vice in either youth. On the contrary, they were both popular with men of the Anglo-Saxon race, which is inclined to be critical of foreigners, and especially of those who differ in colour from themselves. What ruined them was the exuberance of youth, coupled with that fatal want of self-control which is the special snare of young Indian princes at an impressionable age. India and England—each has its own peculiar dangers for young men of high position and wealth which seem almost unlimited. But India has at least this advantage, that the boy is never allowed to forget his rank, whereas in England he is merely one of an eclectic social caste. Many a young Indian has gone astray in England, many a one in India; but it is a commonly canvassed opinion that the dangers of a European environment are apt to counterbalance the advantages of a European education.

## III

In dealing with his youngest son Dhairyashil Rao the Maharaja took warning by his previous failures. He sent him to Eastbourne College, but not to either University. As a baby, Prince Dhairyashil had caused much anxiety. Like his brother Jai Sinh his constitution was delicate. At the age of two it was thought advisable to send him for a sea voyage to Australia and Japan, and the incident is worth noting as an indication of the immense change which had come over the Maharaja since he first took the plunge of a voyage to Europe in 1887. That he was ahead of his time goes without saying. He has been ahead of his time almost throughout his career, not only with regard to the internal reforms which he introduced into his State, but also in respect of the views which he held of the policy of the Government of India—a policy which has since been modified, not in deference to those views but at any rate in accordance with them. Political views sit lightly upon Indians: they are of recent growth, and are subject to change with the changing times. But social customs and social prejudices have their roots deep down in the centuries, almost, in some cases quite, beyond the limits of recorded history. It was almost unheard of that a baby Prince, the son of a ruling Maharaja, should be sent off on a voyage to such distant places as Australia and Japan.

After finishing his course at Eastbourne, Dhairyashil Rao returned to India. But his father was not freed from anxiety on his account. Work had to be found which would engage his interest. The Maharaja attached him to the important departments of the State for training, so that he might prove himself useful in the administration, and impressed on him that he owed 'a duty to self, to family, country, and humanity.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. iii, No. 1494, p. 960, dated 15.8.1917.

In 1918 he wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, to ask for a commission for his youngest son, who had had some training in the State Cavalry. Some few months later he had the satisfaction of seeing the young man under training at Indore. Now at the age of 35 he is at work in the State.

It will be convenient, at the sacrifice of chronology, to trace the career of Jaisinh Rao to its melancholy end. After his return from America a place was found for him in the regular line of administration. He chafed at the restrictions which his father found it advisable to place upon his movements, since he too had shown signs of self-indulgence. Baroda and Bombay held too many temptations, and the State officials, as the Prince himself admitted, 'will not enforce discipline, particularly when high personages are concerned'. But in 1919 he fell ill, and it was thought advisable to send him to Europe for treatment. It was not, however, of any use. The Prince died in Holland on the 27th August 1923, leaving behind him a widow but no children. This sad event has a more peculiar interest for this history, because when the news was first received in India it was thought, owing to the ambiguous wording of the message, that the victim was the Maharaja himself. The newspapers published obituary notices, and the Maharaja had the unusual opportunity of reading what people thought of him, when the fear of his living power had been removed.

Being unfamiliar with Indian titles and custom, Reuter had announced the sudden death in the train from Berlin to Flushing of 'Gaekwar of Baroda'. As a matter of fact His Highness was at St. Moritz and did not mean to leave it till September. It was extremely unlikely that he would have left the Government in Baroda entirely in the dark about his movements, or that a telegram, which was received in India on the 22nd August representing

him as travelling from Berlin, could refer to him. On the other hand, Prince Jaisinh Rao was in Berlin, where he had gone for the treatment of his, as the event proved, fatal illness. The mystery was easily solved by the authorities at Baroda, but the title 'Gaekwar' by which the Maharaja is commonly, though erroneously, known, misled the Press both in England and in India. Obituary notices appeared in all the leading papers. *The Times* did justice to his devotion to his people and referred in generous terms to his conduct during the War:

'Whatever his failings may have been the Gaekwar was a devoted patriot, and his name will go down to history as one of the most interesting, influential and praiseworthy figures in the feudatory India of our time. During the late War he was among the first in practical demonstration of his loyalty to the British Throne.'

But it could not refrain from an allusion to his 'restless and combative' temperament which had sometimes brought him into collision with the Paramount Power and had led to somewhat rapid changes in the office of Dewan of Baroda. *The Morning Post*, in a singularly inaccurate notice, gave special prominence to the period of sedition and revived the hoary legend of the Durbar incident, though it had the grace to attribute to the 'dead' ruler great zeal for the welfare of his subjects. *The Daily Herald* distinguished itself by placing Baroda in the Punjab, as a pendant to the erudition of the Member of Parliament who thought Madras was on the West Coast. It was left to the *Daily Telegraph* to bury past friction in oblivion, and to do graceful justice to the Maharaja's activities in Baroda and to his services in the War. 'Under his guidance', it declared, 'Baroda has become one of the most advanced States in India.' In India the leading Bombay paper gave him qualified praise, finding him

a 'difficult' man in the realm of politics. Newspapers of every shade were, however, unanimous in their appreciation of his administrative and social work, and it was in these that the Maharaja shone. Posterity will continue to wrangle, if it thinks it worth while, over such unfruitful topics as the sedition of 1907, the Durbar incident of 1911, and the general relations with the India Government in the middle of his reign. But the monument which the Maharaja has slowly and painfully erected to himself will still stand when the words of controversy have been forgotten and the dead embers of passion are beyond revival. That monument is the modern Baroda State.

#### IV

By the death of Jaisinh Rao the entire family was reduced to one son and a daughter. The Princess Indira had been privately educated and afterwards went to the Baroda College, rather to the scandal of good folk who thought it was beneath her dignity to join a public institution of the kind. It was hoped that an alliance might be arranged with the Gwalior House of Sindhia and that thus two of the most powerful of the Maratha States might be linked together. The Maharaja Madho Rao Sindhia was an able and resourceful ruler whose versatility was the admiration of all who were brought into close association with him. He, however, had a Maharani living, and it was only after some hesitation that the Maharaja Gaekwar gave his consent to the union with a Prince between whose age and that of his daughter there was disparity. Negotiations had gone far when the Princess, during a visit to Delhi, changed her mind and declared her unalterable determination for the proposal to be abandoned. Her refusal left her parents no alternative to withdrawal of the negotiations.



The Maharaja Gaekwar's letters at the time betray a feeling of natural anxiety as to the future of his only daughter. But this issue was settled on the Western pattern by the choice of the two young people primarily concerned. She married the young Maharaja of Cooch Bihar, who had succeeded his brother after a short reign. His parents were well known in London society and enjoyed the friendship of Queen Victoria, and afterwards of King Edward and Queen Alexandra. His mother was a daughter of Keshub Chander Sen, the Brahmo-Samaj leader, who had exercised a powerful influence in the modernization of religious thought among the educated classes on Deistic lines, and in matters of social reform, and enjoyed the support by speech and pen of the Maharaja Gaekwar himself. The Dowager Maharani has lived to honoured old age, and for more than a generation past has been one of the outstanding women of India. The Maharaja Gaekwar did not actively oppose the application in his own family of the Western custom of leaving young people to make their own choice of life's partners. The romance of the engagement attracted much attention in the newspapers at the time.

By consenting to this marriage the Maharaja had not only broken loose once again from caste tradition but had even ventured a step further. The bridegroom was not even an orthodox Hindu. He belonged to that latitudinarian sect called the Brahmo-Samaj which had been founded by Ram Mohun Roy and developed by Keshub Chander Sen. It paid no attention to the adoration of images, was not concerned with degrees of pollution, refused to recognize at least the outward manifestation of caste. It was by a rough analogy as far removed from orthodoxy as Presbyterianism is removed from the Roman Church. Consequently the wedding took place in London with the rites of the Brahmo communion—and no one

was the worse for this convulsive event. The Maharani is now a widow and is Regent of the State in her son's minority.

## V

It was not to his own children alone that the Maharaja devoted anxious care. His elder brother Anand Rao had been ignored by the British Government on the deposition of Malhar Rao because of his age, which did not allow enough time for education or for the desired minority. The Maharaja speaks affectionately of his elder brother. On his death he writes to his younger brother Sampat Rao from Bangalore:

'I arrived here last evening on my way to Baroda when I was told of the sudden demise of our poor brother. One feels so sorry and all the past stands before one's eye. He was a good brother and a wise sensible man of good common sense. He would have been fit for any big office, had he educated himself.'<sup>1</sup>

It fell to him too, to announce their loss to his nephews then in England, telling them at the same time that henceforward he must take the place of their father. One of the boys went to Oxford and the other to Cambridge. They are now in the Baroda service and are general favourites.

It were tedious to enumerate the various boys over whose careers the Maharaja watched. Letters passed to and from England; reports were sent; instructions were given; allowances were regulated; guardians were chosen. This boy was doing well, that one not so well. Some were happy and some were discontented. One startling incident already alluded to stands out from these domestic concerns. A thunderbolt arrived in the worst

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. iii, No. 1477, p. 953, dated 24.6.1917.

of schoolboy handwriting from Aba Sahceb, son of the Maharaja's younger brother, who was then at Rugby. It demanded instant consent of his 'confirmation' as a Christian, failing which he would not go back to school. It ended, quaintly enough, with the hope that 'the God of gods, Jesus Christ, is keeping you both in good health'. The Maharaja treated it for what it was, a mere schoolboy effusion, but he thought it wiser to write to Rugby and ascertain what had put the idea into the boy's head. This caused something of a stir at Rugby; the Maharaja was assured that neither master nor boy had approached his nephew with any idea of conversion. Probably young Gaekwar found himself isolated among Christian boys and with the peculiar sensitiveness of boyhood wanted to be like the others. At any rate the matter subsided and no more was heard of it.

The narration of these domestic concerns has carried us far beyond the point which the main stream of the story had reached. They run like a thin thread through all the turmoil of political controversy, through all the cares of State administration, through all the distractions of foreign travel. No parent was more anxious than Maharaja Sayaji Rao for the proper upbringing of the younger generations; no parent has more carefully weighed what was best to be done at each stage. Few parents have been less rewarded for their pains.

The best-laid schemes o' mice and men  
Gang aft a-gley.

He paid the penalty of greatness. There was no one whom he could consult, no one to whom he could turn for assistance. In the cold ceremonial of Court etiquette at Baroda he was, and he had to be, Maharaja. He played cricket with his boys, he hunted with them at Ootacamund; yet as they grew up the father receded and the Maharaja

loomed larger. They treated him rather with the awe due to the Prince than with the affection due to the father. It was a misfortune that when once the decision had been taken to send the boys to England—and the Maharaja had no doubt that his decision was right—the cares of State made it necessary to employ guardians, some of whom were strangers, and none of whom were of the Prince's rank in life. The natural desire of the father to watch over his own boys on the spot was thwarted by political checks, soon to be related, which the Government of India imposed upon foreign travel. The Maharaja with his robust common sense shares the view of the English Royal Family, that Princes of non-age should be treated like other boys and be subjected to the same discipline. But for boys who were accustomed to the rather extravagant demonstrations of respect at an Indian Court, and whose lightest word was apt to be treated as a command, it was specially difficult to resist temptation after return to India when they were their own masters. Abundant wealth and the glamour of rank led them into habits of idleness and self-indulgence, in spite of the control exercised by the father. As some one remarked to His Highness, it was not enough to treat them *as if* they had to earn their living: the true incentive for work, and that which eventually makes work a pleasure, is the *necessity* of working. The Maharaja was himself an exception to this rule, but in so far as his love of work was not innate, it was fostered and developed by the care of his tutors and, perhaps too, by the knowledge that he was himself on trial and must justify his selection. Those who had raised up could also pull down. But, above all, the Maharaja made the mistake that many another anxious parent, with far less excuse, has made, of keeping the leading-strings too tight, with the usual, though not inevitable, result that when they were loosened the pupil

ran wild. The Maharaja was alive to the danger. He writes in 1908 to his American friend Dr. Bumpus :

‘I have no desire to exercise irrational or undue control upon the growing lad and I should be particularly sorry if the control went so far as to interfere with the healthy development of his character.’

But in 1909 Prince Jaisinh Rao’s Indian friend, Shirgaokar, writing from Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A., protests against what seemed to be a proposal to appoint a guardian who was not of the University but was expected to live with the Prince :

‘He feels a little sore that he should not be consulted at all in matters which concern him materially. He thinks he is being treated quite like a child. . . . All he has to urge is that it would look bad for him to have a “nurse”, as boys term it here, to look after him. . . . Boys will make fun of Jaisinh Rao, and Mr. Whitenack too will find himself in an awkward position.’<sup>1</sup>

The Maharaja disclaimed any intention of appointing such a guardian, though he admitted that he was making inquiries in that direction, but the letter is not without its significance. Other Princes, too, complained of this excessive control, and objected to being treated as children when they were grown men. Still, it is easy to be wise after the event, and all allowance must be made for the harassed father and the Indian Prince, placed as he was in a very difficult position.

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished letters.

## *Chapter Seven*

### PLAGUE AND FAMINE

ALTHOUGH plague was known to have visited India during the long centuries of her history, and had even appeared in the neighbourhood of Baroda during living memory, the knowledge of it was so dim that when sporadic cases occurred in Bombay in May 1896, it took the authorities by surprise. In the absence of scientific knowledge, such cases were put down to malaria and to typhoidal forms of fever. The result was that it had obtained a firm hold of Bombay City, in certain parts of which the conditions were eminently suited to its spread, before it was fully recognized for what it was. The rapid course of the disease and its generally fatal termination within forty-eight hours created a very intelligible panic, and it was therefore only to be expected that Baroda State, situated as it is so close to Bombay and interlaced with districts of Bombay provinces, would sooner or later become infected.

No one who has not himself administered plague in India can adequately conceive the immensity of the burden thus laid upon the shoulders of Government. On the one side, humanity called to do all that was in human power to save the people even against themselves; on the other, a natural sympathy with the hardships which the more efficacious measures entailed, drew the officers of Government towards relaxation when only the most drastic orders could succeed. Far from co-operating with the Government the people put every obstacle in its way. They pleaded religious susceptibilities, social custom, anything that might turn Government from its purpose, and when all would not do, they occasionally resorted to violent resistance. The case of Poona has become historic, where British soldiers, utterly unacquainted with

the Hindu way of life and contemptuous of what they regarded as nonsensical scruples, were employed to make house-to-house visitations.

Such was the situation which the Baroda Government had to face when, owing to the flight from Bombay of a class of people whose houses were in the southern part of the State, the plague made its first appearance. They looked to Bombay for guidance and copied the Bombay measures, but it was not the least of the perplexities of those superficial days that, since no remedy could be claimed as infallible, many, especially of the subordinate staff, did not believe in the measures that were taken, and had to be driven to carry them out by the force not of reason but of superior authority. The Baroda authorities, like their British contemporaries, did what they could according to their lights. They established hospitals, laid out segregation camps, restricted promiscuous emigration by issuing passes, treated the sick, and cleansed the houses. In fact, they did all that the British Government was doing and appear to have done it very well, but with no greater success than Bombay had.

The people, as elsewhere, exhausted their ingenuity in evading or resisting plague measures. They were fatalists and did not believe in what the Government was doing. The interference, moreover, with their homes was distasteful to them. They did not entirely trust the Police who were set to guard the empty houses, and they feared indignities to the household gods—the *Penates* which are so often to be found in Hindu homes. Every opportunity was seized of rushing back to infected houses. Cases were concealed; deaths were not reported. As in Bombay it was said that men were found playing cards with the dead, so in Baroda a case was quoted in which the women chatted with the dead. The wildest rumours were set afloat. Men, it was said, were rendered impotent by inoculation, or

leprosy was the result of it. Government removed the people to the hospitals to poison them at leisure; or they were merely anxious to show to the world what a lot they were doing. 'The search parties', says the Sanitary Commissioner in reporting to the Maharaja, 'and the plague officers were dreaded as monsters. On my rounds of inspection I was told that people dreaded my very presence and considered me as the messenger of death.'<sup>1</sup>

Very little help was obtained from the people. The merchants of Baroda did organize a hospital which did fairly good work; those organized by the Marathas and Musalmans were not so successful. But whatever faith there was in medical treatment was not reflected in any corresponding faith in repressive or preventive measures. The same merchants begged that the people might be left free as in normal times, and assured the Government that plague would then disappear. 'I am led to think', says the report, 'that the *Mahajans* really believed in what they suggested.'<sup>2</sup>

They were not alone in that belief. In spite of elaborate organization of harassing and vexatious measures and of votes of huge sums, the plague held on its triumphant course, which only fluctuated with the seasons. In a letter to his friend, Mr. Weeden, written in the following year, 1899, the Maharaja said:

'I dare say you know we have had a second course of plague here. The epidemic ran its course and is now dying away. Of course we took the measures which are in fashion, but I hardly think they are of any other use than to show that measures are being taken. The disease begins, continues and ends, reappears and disappears, quite unaffected by them and indeed seems to regard the measures taken with serene indifference. Meanwhile there can be no doubt that the people regard these measures as supremely harassing, though they bear them with

<sup>1</sup> *Report on the Plague Administration of the Baroda State*, 1896-8, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.



great patience. The segregated have to live huddled in miserable sheds which in the present scorching heat must be intolerable; one sees them in the evening cooking their meals outside and the place swarming with children, dogs, etc. in a sort of rude life which is the nearest approach to gipsyism or primitive savagery.’<sup>1</sup>

The truth was that every one was then working in the dark. Rats, it was known, were susceptible but the intimate relation between the rat and the disease was not established; or perhaps it would be truer to say that it had not been discovered how the rat came to be infected. The British authorities of the Residency were assiduous in their attentions, and experts also arrived with advice and suggestions. The authorities at Baroda gratefully acknowledged the help thus given, but the Maharaja was none too pleased. ‘——’, he writes to General Watson, a former Resident, ‘has been taking a special interest in plague matters.’<sup>2</sup>

‘He thinks them of imperial concern and on that ground holds himself entitled to see that full and proper measures are taken for the suppression of plague. This is an attitude which puts one at times in an awkward position.’<sup>2</sup>

It was the old grievance that as long as the State had not a free hand it was liable to paralysis. Nor was the remark without justification. Earlier in the year the Resident complained that the plague arrangements were not kept up to the standard of which he had so cordially approved in 1898. He based his criticism upon a comparison of corresponding weeks in 1898 and 1899. The Maharaja, inwardly chafing at this intervention, assured him that all was as before, with modifications suggested by experience, if anything rather better; and he slyly insinuated that the death-rate in Bombay was ‘anything but

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 408, p. 311, dated 21.5.1899.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, No. 404, p. 308, dated 11.5.1899.

smaller than that of last year'. He ended with a Parthian shot. The visits of the experts, he hinted not obscurely, were undertaken to spy out the land, and he added the not unmerited reproof that if the Resident did not like the arrangements, he should inform the Dewan and not a subordinate officer.

The experiences of Baroda were very much the same as those of British India. Everywhere it was the same story of passive, if not active, resistance to the plague policy; everywhere empiricism had been powerless to check the spread of the disease. As knowledge advanced and as the people themselves began to realize the advantages of certain action, the attacks were met with more confidence, though possibly science itself cannot satisfactorily explain why the epidemic flared up, blazed for a period, and then died down. The Government stood practically alone. The people were in active opposition; the nobles stood haughtily aloof, except when the plague officers visited them, and then they resented the visit as an outrage on their dignity. It was an uphill struggle and, if success was denied to the effort, the Government had vindicated its claim that it had done all that was possible in the then state of scientific knowledge.

It needed not a little courage in those days to venture into plague-infected quarters, to handle the patients, and generally to carry out the operations. The public did not believe that the disease was contagious and, as it proved, they were right; but that faith was founded in intuition and not in reason. They believed what it suited them to believe. Those who had access to expert opinion, such as it was, held their judgement in suspense; it was commonly thought that to touch a patient or to enter a plague-infected house was to tempt Providence; and confidence was rudely shaken when the Suba of Naosari, by whose devoted efforts the town itself was saved, got plague

himself and nearly, though fortunately not quite, died of it. The Maharaja, into whose composition fear of this kind does not enter, set an excellent example. He visited several of the plague camps and personally inspected various parts of Baroda City, and in spite of his scepticism of the results, once having decided on a policy he gave it every chance. The people of Baroda, little as they may have relished the hardships brought upon them by the action of the Government, appreciated the motives which prompted it, and on the 19th May 1898 they presented a thanksgiving address to His Highness.

Plague as an appalling yearly visitation seems now mysteriously to have died out—mysteriously, because though the causes of it are now well known, and the people have to a certain extent learned the value of the scientific methods of dealing with it, they still have their superstitions and their prejudices and their fears. Baroda as a whole has been singularly free from the scourge, but only two years ago, when it made its appearance in the South of the Raj and the people were with some difficulty induced to take some precautions for their safety, the occurrence of the Id festival drove the Musalman population back into the infected houses, and the work which was more than half done was all to do over again. In those early years the Maharaja might well despair of any measures however well intentioned.

## II

Hardly had the Maharaja successfully grappled with, or been delivered from, the scourge of plague, than he and his Government were called upon to deal with a yet more terrible calamity. The general poverty of the Indian ryot combined with ingrained habits of unthrift and other factors which may here be ignored, have rendered him peculiarly dependent on the regularity of the annual

rainfall. There are few parts of India which may be called immune from famine. The heavily watered plains of Bengal, and the narrow strips which are protected by the Western Ghats and the Vindhya, to which may perhaps be added the submontane tracts of the Himalayas, are the only parts guaranteed by Nature.<sup>1</sup> By the extension of irrigation, especially of that kind which has an assured supply, man has made gigantic efforts to supplement this meagre list, but the result, though satisfactory in itself, is but small relatively to the huge areas of the great peninsula which lies under the shadow of a yearly anxiety.

The fertile plains of Gujerat were supposed, with popular complacency, perhaps with patriotic self-persuasion, to enjoy this immunity—in spite of the warning given by the Famine Commission of 1880 that 'the districts of Bombay above the Western Ghats' were to be included in the parts of India most subject to drought. Gujerat in fact, a large part of which lies round about the lower courses of the Narbada and the Tapti, just escapes the influence of the Vindhya to the east and of the Western Ghats to the south. For all that, the record of its famines and even of its years of scarcity is happily meagre, and the fool's paradise in which the people were living when the visitation descended upon them is excusable. The terrible famine of 1877-8, which devastated the south of India, and the less severe calamity of 1897-8 had passed by Gujerat with little more than a reminder that such things could happen, and popular tradition had to go back for over a century to recall a real famine which took serious toll of the people. Of that visitation there was no record; the horrors of it, whatever they were, were blurred by the passing of the years, and fancy was allowed to run riot over the tales of beneficence of the rulers, and of the foresight of the people in meeting the scourge.

<sup>1</sup> Famine Commission Report, 1880.

## III

Both the authorities and the people were accordingly taken unawares when the rain-laden month of July 1899 yielded nothing. June had been normal, and the early showers had naturally induced the cultivators to begin their usual work. The failure of July made every one anxious, but hope dies hard and August might yet retrieve the situation. But August was as dry as July. And when September produced but a negligible rainfall, anxiety deepened into certainty. By October, when prices had soared and cattle were freely dying, all hope was abandoned. The fact had to be faced that favoured Gujerat was in the grip of severe famine.

It is impossible to convey in words the portentous meaning of this terrible word. The physical eye must see the waste of uncultivated fields where crops should be, the puny yellow straw, like the thin wisps of an old woman's hair, where normally there was a carpet of brilliant green; the parched and cracked beds of reservoirs, where the water should be standing ten feet deep; the withered scraps of grass among which the cattle nosed for something to eat, and overhead the pitiless sun, which seemed, like Homer's Apollo, to be taking vengeance on the people for no fault of theirs. But the eye of imagination must see farther. Famine does not show itself at once. There are stocks which suffice for a time; there is work to be done for a time; trade is not immediately dislocated, and prices rise high only when scarcity begins to be felt. But the stocks cannot be replenished; the fodder comes to an end; the demand for labour ceases when no one can buy, and the prosperous ryot and able-bodied labourer of October is changed into the gaunt and desperate skeleton of April, praying only for such help as will keep the body alive. The

Maharaja has himself recorded his own impressions in vivid language:

‘It is difficult to describe the desolation of that scene. A day hushed and heat-stricken, without breath of wind, motion of leaf, a flight or chirping of birds, or the sight of any animal; not even the circling of the kite in the blue wideness of the heavens! The city (Dabhoi) was void of any throng of men, nor was there the sound of any bell from its temples. There was a pervading and appalling air of silence, an air of universal affliction and silent fear of the anger of heaven made visible in that burning sun and those long rainless skies: this sun which seemed to have deposed the other elements of nature and usurped sole sovereignty, tiring man and beast with the tyranny of his rays. Earth itself lay parched, bare and prostrate; no longer a pregnant mother of life and nurse of men but herself thirsting for water, herself stricken with famine. No blade of grass, no trace of crop! the country lay wide, bare and brown. Trees and cactus alone seemed to defy the burning rays!’<sup>1</sup>

#### IV

The authorities did not waste time in vain imaginings. The imminent danger of famine was reported to the Maharaja, and a Famine Department was organized. The famine of 1877-8 had found the Government of India little prepared for such a formidable crisis, and the Famine Commission of 1880 was appointed to go over the whole problem of relief, and to advise upon a settled policy in the light of the experience of the recent disaster. It was not the least of their recommendations that a Famine Code should be prepared, to serve as a body of general instructions. The Commissioners pointed out that:

‘The duties involved in relief measures are complicated and multifarious; their successful performance necessitates the utilisation of large stores of accumulated experience and a carefully considered and prepared plan; they cannot be safely left

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on the Famine Tour*, by His Highness the Maharaja Gaekwar, p. 103.

to individual energy and resource or be dealt with on a system improvised only when the emergency has arisen. Prompt and decided action in carrying out these measures is of primary importance, and by considering well beforehand the principles that should guide them, much of that hesitation and uncertainty of purpose which have been found to be so detrimental in the past will be avoided in future.' <sup>1</sup>

These recommendations, however, applied only to British India, and though the report of the Commission, which was issued, it will be remembered, in the period of the minority, was available to the public, it had not been acted upon in Baroda State. The false sense of security which arose from the reputation of Gujerat for freedom from famine had led to a neglect of the subject, and one of the earliest cares of the Maharaja as soon as the spectre of famine became 'dimly apparent' was to study the famine rules which 'lay hidden among the State records'. But the famine was making rapid strides, and in the stress of the immediate work there was no time for any elaborate revision of the rules. All that could be done in this direction was to issue orders 'which were really meant to test the value of some of the plans that had suggested themselves to me'. <sup>1</sup> This Code in its imperfect state was at once put into operation. But a regular programme had not been prepared, works had to be improvised, and there is nothing so wasteful as improvised works in a famine unless it be war. As in war-time, no one stops to think very seriously what money is being spent in face of the primary necessity of saving life, and even with a regularly prepared programme the comparative immobility of starving folk necessitates the provision of work that would not otherwise be undertaken. Moreover, the very fact that the people are starving reduces their capacity for

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Indian Famine Commission, 1880, p. 37.*

<sup>2</sup> *Notes on the Famine Tour, by His Highness the Maharaja Gaekwar, pp. 4 and 5.*

work, and that at a time when the resources of a State such as Baroda are being taxed to its utmost limit. The Maharaja felt the difficulty. Writing to Sir John Watson in December 1899, he speaks of the 'great difficulty we have to get useful projects for being undertaken as relief works. The country being flat, and purely agricultural, we cannot devise any work which will engage for some considerable time a goodly number of labourers. Even as it is we daily engage throughout the whole Raj nearly 65,000 souls.'<sup>1</sup> And to Mr. Elliot, who knew the condition of Baroda finances, he confides his fear that the State would exhaust all its savings.

But the provision of work, though in some respects the most complicated, is by no means the only form of relief required by a famine. There are many, especially among the poorest classes, who are not fit for work. To the aged and infirm, to young children, and pregnant women must be added the class peculiar to India which does not appear in public, and that other class, not perhaps peculiar to, but characteristic of India, which prizes dignity above even life itself, and would rather die than mix with the common herd of labourers. Poor-houses were opened; the system of State loans was relaxed, and extended; special kitchens were opened for children. The condition of the cattle presented a problem of peculiar difficulty, and attempts were made to solve it in various ways. Cholera too, from which Baroda State is in normal times singularly free, followed in the wake of the general scarcity, and strained the resources of the Medical Department to the utmost. All that could be done was done, and private charity came to the aid of the Government both by the establishment of poor-houses and also by setting up cheap grain shops and by supplying clothes and food.

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 441, p. 331, dated 15.12.1899.



In December 1899 the Maharaja made a tour through the northern part of his dominions, the District of Kadi, where distress was very acute, especially in the north-west and in the south. The total rainfall in the whole province had averaged only 3.75 inches, of which 3.15 had fallen in June, giving deceptive hopes of a normal season, and in one tract in the north-west, which 'even in times of prosperity is proverbially poor', had received only one insignificant shower which hardly served to wet the surface. This particular district was taken under the personal care of the Dewan and the Revenue Commissioner; the Maharaja was content to leave it in their competent hands, and himself went elsewhere.

When famine is abroad it is hard to resist the pathetic appeals of the helpless people to whom the Government officer is the last hope of salvation. To the Maharaja the case of the little children, and of women just become or about to become mothers, was especially pitiful. In these and in other cases he gave orders on the spot, but the greatest value of his visit was the heart that it put into the people. The knowledge that their own Maharaja was among them, the evidence, patent to the least observing eye, that he was doing what he could to save them, inspired them with the will to live. He moved about freely, conversing with all and sundry, and giving a sympathetic ear to their humble and harrowing tales of distress, and he takes some delight in the thought that sometimes his identity was not discovered. He was then in the heyday of his manhood, and, either better mounted than his followers, or more impetuous, he would often arrive alone at a village, leaving them to toil after him and catch him up as best they could.

But if the relief of distress was the first consideration, he was not so far carried away by his sympathy for the sufferers as to forget that economy was the second, and

that while the limited resources of the State had to be nursed, it was also desirable to see that the works undertaken were of ultimate utility. Some of the works opened did not satisfy this test, and did not, he judged, even serve the purpose for which they were intended. But he felt that it would be ungenerous to find fault with those who, suddenly faced with a novel and difficult situation, were manifestly doing their best to cope with it. It was not a time for bickering and quarrel; if they were to pull through at all it was only by dint of the closest co-operation.

While he fully realized the necessities of all other classes of the population, the Maharaja's heart went out no less to the agriculturists who 'requested, demanded, almost insisted on indulgent treatment'. The immediate question before him was to what extent he was able to remit or suspend the land revenue on which the prosperity of the State depended. In this respect an Indian State is in a far weaker position than the Government of India, whose credit stands high in the world, and who can therefore float loans already assured of success. It was difficult to surrender this most valuable source of the State's income, and though it was possible to borrow from the Government of India or otherwise, the Maharaja shrank instinctively from the 'danger of debt, and the servitude to which the State would be reduced'. But his sympathies were entirely with the people. He felt that Government was not doing enough for that class of its subjects 'which, not merely from a humanitarian point of view, but from an economical standpoint, deserves more liberal treatment than is accorded at present'. He found the people eminently reasonable, and pays them a well-deserved tribute:

'Throughout my different tours undertaken for different purposes and at different times, I have come into contact with

the cultivator class and I have found that its collective common-sense, when unexcited and dispassionate, is generally correct, and such as deserves serious consideration before it is dropped or pooh-poohed. It is easier to deal with them than with their self-styled representatives as we find them in the Council Hall of Governors and in the Courts of Justice—men who have picked up the declamation, the harangue, the notions, perhaps the sentiments of the West. These gentlemen are, in their turn, fast becoming the guides of the naturally credulous peasants, who are too far removed from their legitimate Rulers to understand the latter or to be understood by them.’<sup>1</sup>

From Kadi the Maharaja went to Amreli in Kathiawar. Here the soil is generally poor, and the rainfall light; the country is peculiarly susceptible, if not to actual drought, to unpleasant vagaries of the season. In 1899 the rains failed as they failed in all parts of the Raj except in the western part of the most southerly district. The numerical returns of course varied, but the general result was that no rain worth having fell between July and October in any of the stricken districts. His Highness was, however, struck by the stalwart appearance of the men, and got the general impression that the cultivators of Kathiawar were not so emaciated as those in the Baroda Division. Perhaps the meagre return which they wring from the soil even in normal seasons had inured them to hardship.

A tour through Baroda District and City followed. By this time the effects of the famine were everywhere visible, and at the poor-house in Baroda the people had sunk into the lethargy of despair, not caring even for the comfort of personal cleanliness. The little children, whose rags hardly sufficed to cover them, were pestered with swarms of flies attracted by the filth on their bodies. Elsewhere there were women, mere bags of bones, too listless to take notice even of the Maharaja, and too

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on the Famine Tour*, by His Highness the Maharaja Gaekwar, p. 27. Acute remarks in the light of what has happened since.

feeble to drive away the flies. Their skin was unhealthy; their eyes were sunken and lustreless; the children were in a deplorable state: and everywhere the dirt was incredible. Well might the Maharaja exclaim:

'I shall never forget the impression it made on me. God forbid that such miserable scenes and sufferings should ever be witnessed again! It is wonderful how the people put up with these hardships. They had resigned every hope of a happy existence, and seemed to think man could do nothing when God Himself proved unkind.'<sup>1</sup>

## V

Navsari in the south had hitherto not attracted so much attention. The normal rainfall is more copious there, perhaps because of the existence of forests in the east, but more probably because it is on the fringe of the sphere of influence of the Western Ghats. In June the fall had been plentiful, and July had yielded an appreciable quantity; but from September onwards the conditions were nearly as bad as elsewhere. The rise of prices, and the establishment of famine conditions all over Gujerat had not left the more favoured parts untouched, and it was particularly in the forest tracts, where the primitive people are still in the early stages of civilization, that the pinch was felt. It was now drawing to the end of March. The authorities who had been so intensely preoccupied with the three divisions, where men and cattle were dying in shoals, had not had the leisure to attend to this comparatively favoured tract, though it had been whispered that the forest people were in as great distress as their companions in misfortune elsewhere. The Maharaja, who had had a passing acquaintance with these folk on previous tours, breaks off his narrative here to record his impressions. The very fact that he was able to devote some

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

leisure to ethnological study showed, as he says, that things were not so bad here as elsewhere, and he could 'afford to give his mind a holiday, a pleasant and healthy rebound from a persistent state of tension'.

'The males (he notes) among these tribes rarely wear turbans. On the other hand they are dressed in short jackets and scarves (dhotars), which last when worn somewhat resemble in appearance the Italian military tunic. At home they put on nothing but a small piece of cloth (langoti) tied round the loins and a small tape wound about the head. Ordinarily the women wear no bodices and exhibit with a kind of pride, and certainly without any shyness, a bounteous development of bosom; but of late some of them have taken to the more refined fashion of covering their breasts. They have only a thick piece of coloured scarf which goes round the loins and passes up behind the back exhibiting firm, well-rounded limbs some inches above the knees. . . . They freely indulge in their barbaric love of personal ornaments by wearing clusters of beads and heaps of coloured shells round their necks. They put on a number of anklets made of brass which make a peculiar tinkling sound when they move.'<sup>1</sup>

The Maharaja found that, though the marriage tie was easily dissolved, there was nothing resembling promiscuity. The woman might leave her husband, but as long as they lived together they were mutually faithful. Animists by religion, they 'have a staunch belief in the efficacy of witchcraft, and the dangers of the evil eye'. Like all primitive tribes they do not know how to tell a lie, and their very artlessness sends them to jail or to the scaffold. 'However,' says the Maharaja with scornful jocularly, 'the modern system of law courts and Vakils will soon teach them the ways of chicanery and prevarication.' All the spirit has been long ago crushed out of them by the 'unsympathetic treatment' of their neighbours, before whom they have retreated to the forests, infested with malaria and wild beasts.

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on the Famine Tour*, by His Highness the Maharaja Gaekwar, p. 117.

The Maharaja opened some works for these folk, and gave various orders as he had been doing throughout his famine tours. But his stay among these children of the jungle was something of a holiday; what work was done was of a more general nature, and the tour was pleasantly rounded off by a few days' shikar. And so back to Baroda, where preparations for Europe had to be made. The Maharani had been unwell, and the doctors advised an operation in a bracing climate; the Maharaja, moreover, was anxious to arrange for his sons' education in England, but the Maharani's health was the first consideration. The journey had already been put off too long; the hot weather was in full swing, and on the 18th May the party left for Europe.

Before he went, however, he laid the foundation-stone of a large irrigation work which was designed to irrigate some 14,000 acres. The Maharaja seized the opportunity of driving home the lessons of the famine. Relief works, he insisted, were all very well in their way; they were palliatives, but the root of the evil was still there :

'How is it that the people of this country have fallen into such a condition that stamina seems altogether wanting in them? The failure of rain for a single season has come with crushing force upon them. It has left them naked of resources, it has thrown ever more and more thousands and hundreds of thousands on the charity of Government relief! What are the reasons of this disastrous condition of things and by what remedies can it be met? This is what should engage the earnest attention of those in authority.'

The root cause was poverty; yet poverty itself was only the product of what was lacking in character—'want of real thrift, want of energy and enterprise, of legitimate ambition and a high ideal; passiveness, fatalism, and supineness in the face of certainty. Unless this state of

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

things is removed, unless the people can be taught self-help, it seems inevitable that things should go from bad to worse.’<sup>1</sup> But all purely agricultural peoples are liable to drought, to scarcity, to famine, and the Maharaja passed on to develop a favourite theme, the encouragement of industries. Government, he declared, was ready to play its part:

‘But whatever encouragement and help the Government may give, it can do nothing unless there is self-help from the people. Education by instruction and example is the great begetter of self-help. But it is the misfortune of India that its educated sons choose to be as helpless and unenterprising as the ignorant. . . . They must begin to work out new careers for themselves in a spirit of manliness and self-reliance. Then only can any sensible improvement take place. When education, enterprise and self-help, backed by the assistance and encouragement of States and Governments, unite, then will begin an era which will speedily make such lamentable experiences as the present year’s a thing antiquated and impossible.’<sup>2</sup>

## VI

The great famine-year was drawing to a close. With the coming of the monsoon the usual operations would begin; there would be work for all, and hope which was better than work. May was well advanced, and the middle of June would bring the welcome rain. The officers of the State, from the Dewan downwards, had worked with a zeal and energy, and also with a cheeriness, which were beyond praise. They had deserved well of the State; they had shown to the critics of native administration, what native administration could do in a crisis.

The Maharaja now had to choose between his desire to stand by his State and the imperative necessity of a visit to Europe on account of the Maharani’s health.

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on the Famine Tour*, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

He felt that he could safely leave the guidance of affairs in the hands of his capable Minister and his colleagues.

But these fair hopes were doomed to disappointment. The relief from anxiety was short lived. 'Every speck in the sky', says the official report, 'was watched very anxiously. Lightning, thunders, and clouds were eagerly noted.' But June went by, and brought nothing but a few light showers. July followed with no better promise, when suddenly down came the rain. The promise was maintained all through August, but September failed after the second week and October was dry. It was a grievous disappointment to those who had counted on the new season to retrieve the losses of the past one; the people were ill fitted to bear the strain of a second year of scarcity, though the visitation was out of all comparison lighter than that which had gone before.

Famine succeeded by scarcity would have broken the hearts of most people, but the Indian ryot has an inexhaustible store of patience, if of not much else. But the third year was no better than the second. The rain was scanty, fitful, and ill distributed. 'It was so whimsical in character that wide differences were noticed in the conditions of moisture and of out-turn of crops from village to village, and even from field to field.'<sup>1</sup> Again hope deferred was making the heart of the people sick; again they had to struggle through those terrible months of April and May when the stocks are getting low and the cattle are getting lean. But this time the anger of the gods was at last appeased. For a few anxious weeks it seemed that yet another bad year was in store, but July brought relief and by the end of September all fear had vanished. Gujerat was herself again. The strain on the resources had been enormous. Over a crore, or upwards of £700,000, had

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Famine Operations, 1900-3*, p. 24.



been spent, representing about one-eighth of the whole revenue. Nor was this all. The expenditure in 1902-3 was insignificant and the brunt fell upon the three preceding years. Moreover, the State could not realize its normal revenue. The ryots were in no condition to pay taxes, and remissions and suspensions had to be granted. Unlike British India, Baroda State was not in a position to float a loan, and in a small State the possible savings from postponed works are by no means unlimited. It was indeed well that the prudence of the Maharaja and his capacity for good government had long before established the finances upon a sound footing, and to him and to his officers belongs the credit of steering the ship successfully through the shoals until they reached the open sea once more. In spite of all efforts the loss of life had been very great: 162,000 in excess of the normal died in the first two years when the famine was at its height, and the total number of deaths for the whole period of distress was close on 200,000—an appalling figure compared with the two million odd which represented the entire population of the State. By no means all of these were due to starvation; cholera and malarial fever were responsible for a large proportion, but they were acting upon greatly enfeebled frames, and were deadly in consequence. Cholera, in fact, is not a disease which in normal times has any appreciable effect upon the death-rate in Baroda, and malarial fever, though debilitating, is not ordinarily fatal. How far the diagnosis was correct is open to question. The Baroda doctors had at least this consolation, that the epidemics were even more severe in the surrounding British districts.

The people strove hard to keep their cherished cattle alive. They sold their ornaments, utensils, even doors and rafters to buy fodder, but in the end there was none left, and the cattle died. Half a million were thus lost in

the Kadi district alone in the first year, and the total loss for the Raj was upwards of 850,000. Such are the habits of the people, and such the religious veneration for bovines, that the Indian herd usually contains a fair proportion of animals of little value, whose resisting power to privations is not high. These were mostly lost in the first year. The better class of animal remained, and with fewer mouths to feed the rate of mortality decreased surprisingly. Out of the total of 850,000, less than 100,000 were ascribed to the remaining  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years.

Yet after all, in spite of the awful misery, the prolonged agony of those terrible years, the famine had had some slight consolations. It had brought together Ruler and the ruled in an intimacy never before known. It had severely tested the Government and its officers, and they had come well out of the ordeal. It had shown to the world that a State organization, properly directed and efficiently supervised, could accomplish as much as the more experienced British districts. It had opened the flood-gates of charity; and finally it had, at a terrible price, administered such a lesson as would not easily be forgotten. The legend of the immunity of Gujerat had been rudely shattered; henceforward the authorities would be on their guard.

## VII

The trial of their strength was not long delayed: 1903 had proved only an illusory breathing space, and in 1904 the rain was again deficient. But this time the premonitory warnings of abnormal variations in the conduct of the people, in the state of the market, and in the register of crime—sure indications of actual or anticipated distress, were not disregarded. The Famine Code which had been improvised in 1899 had now been carefully revised with the help of Sir Antony Macdonnell's Report of 1901,

and was now the authoritative guide for famine work. The cultivators also had learned in the hard school of experience and had laid by stocks of fodder, so that the cattle mortality of 1899-1900 was not likely to be repeated. The season was, in fact, a great improvement upon that disastrous year, and though the scarcity was acutely felt, especially in Kathiawar, the foresight of the ryots and the general preparedness of the Government prevented anything like a disaster. Men and cattle did not die in any unusual numbers; there were no epidemics; prices rose, but did not become seriously inflated. The Commission of 1901, coming, it would seem, to a somewhat hasty conclusion on the strength of some early incidents in the famine of 1899, and oblivious of the fact that Baroda was not prepared for the crisis, had complained of the emigration of Baroda subjects to British Districts, which had 'hampered the British administration of relief and greatly affected the mortality in the British Districts'. It was now Baroda's turn to employ the retort courteous. The tide of emigration had set the other way; but the Baroda Government admitted that in the territorial conditions of the State that was inevitable, and declared roundly that the influx from outside neither hampered the Baroda administration nor increased the mortality in the slightest. Such bickerings were unfortunate, though perhaps inevitable. Famine on a large scale is an imperial concern, and the Viceroy kept himself informed of the progress of relief both in the States and in British India. It was natural that a British province, striving to do its utmost for the relief of its own population, and aghast at the influx from a neighbouring State, should draw inferences from the very incomplete information which it had. It was true that relief works were started rather late in Baroda, and even so late as the 30th October the Resident was instructed to press for the immediate opening of

them, but from November onwards he generously acknowledged that 'His Highness the Gaekwar is prepared to do his best and to meet his responsibilities'.

Another scarcity in 1911-12 gave the *coup de grâce* to the legend that Gujerat was immune. The ryots, who by this time had recovered from the previous disasters, were crippled in the cold weather by a sudden frost which blighted the late standing crops in a night. The memory of former famines seems to have been blunted, for when in the regular course of the year the rain failed, they were caught unprepared to feed their cattle. A curious situation arose. In the great famine of 1899-1900 the problem, serious though it was, was subordinated to the more pressing problem of the people. In 1911-12 the people were in no great straits, except perhaps in Kathiawar, but the fodder failed very early. Great herds wandered about from village to village in search of pasture, and then passed in a never-ending stream to the southern district, where the forests are. Arrived at the jungles with their charges, the herdsmen began to fall sick of the virulent malaria for which the forest is notorious. They and their cattle were exhausted; the river Tapti, which barred the way to healthier parts, was in flood, and the cattle were too feeble to swim. There were no grain shops; the herdsmen had no supplies. They gave up the unequal struggle and fled to less inhospitable parts, leaving their cattle to shift for themselves in the jungle. There they roamed about aimlessly, singly or in herds, a prey to the wild beasts, to exhaustion, or to disease. The Report gives a vivid description:

'Abandoned by their owners, they roamed from place to place; and when left behind by fatigue or separated from their herd, they lay down never to rise again. A number of them could be seen thus lying by the road side in solitary meditation worn out with fatigue. The next day they were only

corpses lying neglected on the road. Mangled limbs, scattered bones, and whole skeletons, with devouring vultures hovering and flapping their wings around marked the last resting-place of many a noble cow from Kankrej and Gujerat.'<sup>1</sup>

The Government did what was possible. The usual measures were taken to alleviate human distress, and special efforts were made to deal with the cattle problem. The Maharaja, as in 1899, went on tour into the affected districts, but the methods were by this time well understood, and the orders required were not many. The monsoon was fortunately abundant, and the Maharaja could enjoy his summer sojourn at Ootacamund with a mind at rest.

<sup>1</sup> *Famine Report*, 1911-12, p. 60.

## *Chapter Eight*

### THE CURZON CIRCULAR

IN mid-Victorian days the common attitude in British India towards the States was to regard them as antiquated oriental despotisms, which compared with our own civilized Government much as the Government of Cetewayo compared with that of Natal. There was some kind of a government no doubt, but it was the government of an autocrat which, to those brought up to the uncritical acceptance of democracy as the last word in political science, must be bad. Corruption was everywhere rife; justice, if not actually venal, was more or less uncertain; the only thought of the servants was to please the Maharaja, and the first thought of the Maharaja was to please himself. Things, as Dr. Johnson said of the woman preacher, were not done well; the wonder was that they were done at all. That was the legend. The average Englishman knew nothing about it of course, and if he had been asked whether the government of this State or that was good or bad, he would have admitted that he did not know. Even now whispers may be heard that it is only those States which have been under British administration, or which have for a period been governed by men trained in British ways, that possess a really tolerable administration. Latterly the people themselves, who once were content to accept the Maharaja as the personification of divinity, have begun to clamour for a democratic constitution and to challenge the old ways of autocracy.

Lest it should be thought that the colours are too lurid, let me call in aid an undoubted authority who had special knowledge of the States :

‘Very little is known about the Indian States. The number of British officials who serve in the State is small, and to the

officials of British India the land of the Rajas is indeed a *terra incognita*. Hasty observers who have read Reports, or who have seen with their own eyes the great public works of British India, and many other signs of material progress, are apt to regard the Indian State as an anachronism. They do not reflect that an institution indigenous, Indian in spirit and genius, and ancient, is not necessarily an anachronism.<sup>1</sup>

That notions at the time were crude and shadowy may readily be admitted, but the legend was there and still persists. The older men who have not served out of British India still cherish the belief that an Indian State must, owing to its own inherent depravity, be a hotbed of intrigues, a nest of corruption, and an engine of oppression. It is imagined that when the Viceroy visits an Indian State and says nice things of the Ruler, he does so with his tongue in his cheek, since common politeness demands that you shall reveal nothing of your host's faults and exalt whatever of virtue you may be able to unearth, especially the virtue of hospitality, which is invariably lavish.

Political officers of wide experience know that the legend is not true. They know that there are States where the government is thoroughly bad, and if the archives of the Government of India were ransacked, we should probably find examples of an almost inexhaustible patience. But they also know that there are other States which, if they do not quite come up to the British standard of efficiency, do not fall far short of it. A Resident of that wider experience would make allowances. He would contrast Baroda, striving as it was after good government, with some medieval State which, perhaps, he had only just left, or which lingered in his memory. He would reflect that if it fell short, it was for lack of opportunity or lack of means. He would remember that the days of orderly

<sup>1</sup> *The India We Served*, by Walter Lawrence, p. 192.

government were few in comparison with those of a British Province. He would recognize that Indian ways are not always English ways, and not on that account necessarily worse. And noting these things, he would content himself with observation and kindly hints, only interfering in internal affairs in the most extreme cases, when oppression of the people was becoming marked, or when the extravagance of the Ruler threatened the State with ruin. Other Residents of narrower mind, perhaps more unyielding, with less experience of what native government could be at its best, and therefore prepared to find the worst, were tempted to intervene in matters that hardly concerned them, because in their simplicity they thought everything wrong that did not conform to their own British standard of what was right.

## II

It cannot but have been galling to Maharaja Sayaji Rao, conscious as he was of his own rectitude and sincerity of purpose for the people he loved, to find himself thwarted in this unwarrantable manner by men whose only justification was that they did not see things as he did. When he got a Resident of the first type all went smoothly. His letters to General Watson, and in a lesser degree to Colonel Jackson, even after they had left Baroda State, are written in the friendliest tone. But men of the second type frankly irritated him. The Maharaja is a man of strong nature, careless of irresponsible criticism, but jealous of his own dignity and power. He resented, and would still resent interference which he considered uncalled for, and especially any encouragement by the Residency to apply to it and not to the State for the redress of grievances, for 'the State cannot exist and rule under such treatment'.<sup>1</sup> He writes to Mr. Elliot, always his confidant, in March 1895 :

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 154, p. 117, dated 19.5.1895.



‘—— has done a great deal of mischief, the effect of which will last for a very long period. His conduct has weakened immensely my power and position and rendered good government most difficult, if not impossible—I was never so unhappy as I was during the last trip when I wanted much sympathy and help. I got the reverse from the Agent to the Governor General.’<sup>1</sup>

Things were apparently not going too smoothly in Baroda. He saw much to disquiet him on his return from Europe, and says so to Colonel Martelli, who had succeeded the former Resident. Perhaps he thought he had said too much, and was exposing the weakness of the State to the interference he dreaded, for he writes a month later:

‘You will, I have no doubt, admit from your experience how very necessary and important it is to safeguard the rights and autonomy of a Native State, especially when a fairly competent management of its affairs is expected of it. The upholding of the corporate rights and privileges of the allied and protected States is due to the magnanimous and liberal policy of the British, born of their unshaken love of justice and fair play.’<sup>2</sup>

Here was a clear bid for the sympathy and help which he craved, but he seems still to have been afraid that his appeal might be construed into unwelcome action, for he adds:

‘I would also ask you to avoid putting on paper anything which may tell with detriment on the administration, and at a time when things look a little out of joint. I can understand the people petitioning to the Residency and the Foreign Office (in Calcutta). I may mention to you as a friend that recent events during my absence have disturbed the quiet of Baroda.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 143, p. 105, dated 2.3.1895.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, No. 153, p. 114, dated 18.5.1895.

## III

What is known as the 'Bapat' case is a good example of the matters in which Residents of those days considered it their duty, if not to interfere, at least to offer advice. Bapat was an assistant in the Settlement Department and Elliot's right-hand man—so much so that some among the simple villagers to whom Elliot was altogether too Olympian, regarded him as the real arbiter of their fate. On the 13th June 1894 the Agent wrote to the Dewan, informing him that petitions had been brought to the Residency charging Bapat with corruption and drawing attention to an article in the *Ahmedabad Times*. He admitted that it was nothing to him if the State chose to take no action, but hinted that such a charge publicly made would, if not answered, react upon the fair name of Baroda, and suggested that the Maharaja would expect the Council to take action.

This letter seems to have caused some flutter in the Council. A long correspondence ensued between the Council, the Agency, and the Maharaja in Europe, with the result that a Committee of Inquiry was ordered. Bapat was eventually acquitted, though the Committee in a portentous report was distinctly unfavourable; but he was got rid of 'for reasons of State policy'.<sup>1</sup> The whole case seems to have degenerated from a real judicial inquiry into a trial of strength between the Marathi and Gujerati parties in the State. Baroda is never quite free from these jealousies, which are perhaps accentuated by the fact that the Maratha is really a foreigner in Gujerat. Bapat himself was a Maratha; and Manibhai the Minister was a Gujerati. The Maharaja seems to allude to this when in a letter to Elliot he speaks of 'factions,

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., vol. i, No. 208, p. 164, dated 24.9.1895.

khatpat,<sup>1</sup> ill-feeling, distrust, uncertainty'.<sup>2</sup> The whole affair was really of no great importance. It is true that Bapat was in his own line a fairly high officer, but such people can be, and are, dealt with, without all the paraphernalia of a special inquiry, involving the engagement of prominent lawyers on each side. The Maharaja describes the matter as 'a great worry from beginning to end'.<sup>3</sup> Bapat was but a small incident in the career of Baroda State, but he served to bring into prominence the attitude of the Agency (or Residency, for the two names are in practice interchangeable) towards the internal affairs of Baroda at that time. It can hardly be laid seriously to the charge of the Agent that he was exceeding his instructions; it may well be that much depended upon the personality of the man. But it is tolerably certain that the policy of the Government of India, far from forbidding such intervention, allowed the Agent considerable latitude in the interpretation of his duties; and it is equally certain that the Ministry at the time stood in great awe of the Residency. At the same time, it is plain that the whole thing was mismanaged. There never was any need for a special commission, and there never was any need for such a portentous inquiry—nor does it appear that the Resident ever expected any such thing. But the mere hint of his wishes made the Ministers lose their heads. The Maharaja complains and, so far as one can see, rightly complains that this petty affair has been magnified—chiefly by fear of the Residency—into a regular State trial:

'Great has been the fuss and annoyance over this business. The most provoking thing is that it was quite unnecessary. Never was there such a signal instance of much ado about nothing. If only the Ministers and officers had consulted and

<sup>1</sup> Intrigue.      <sup>2</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 225, p. 176, dated 13.12.1895.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, No. 208, p. 163, dated 24.9.1895.

informed me about the matter, I should have been only too glad to have got it inquired into and disposed of in the most direct and simple manner. Instead of this they kept me consistently uninformed and thus in my absence took a very hasty initiative. It has really been a case of a sort of big soap bubble and really insignificant matter, blown out to look immense and conspicuous; and it has been a costly bubble too.’<sup>1</sup>

The Minister Manibhai Jashbhai was evidently not strong enough to stand up to an imperious Resident; he was driven into the course he took by fear of the Residency on the one side, and fear of the Maharaja on the other. Incidentally, the Bapat case proved his undoing, but that belongs to another chapter of Baroda history. The Maharaja was ill and seemingly irritable; he writes: ‘my stomach gets now and then a little disordered, and to-day that important organ which has so much to do with our temper is rather upset.’<sup>2</sup> He chafed under the dictation of the Residency, and complained bitterly that their action in making him hand over his powers to the Council has done ‘incalculable harm to the State, and deranged its internal machinery, and weakened the Central authority’. He pours out his intimate thoughts into Mr. Elliot’s sympathetic ear (August 1895):

‘I feel myself alone without much support to my unaided resources. I consider what took place in my absence as equivalent to revolution in the feelings of the people towards its legitimate government. . . . I feel really frightened and disgusted to take any real part in the government of the State. I begin to distrust myself and feel confused as to what I should do.’<sup>3</sup>

He seemed to himself to be in a net from which there was no escape. The Residency seemed to hang like a thunder-cloud over the administration; his best intentions were thwarted, and his own authority was under

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., vol. i, No. 208, p. 163, dated 24.9.1895.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. i, No. 189, p. 146, dated 13.8.1895.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol. i, No. 193, p. 149, dated 18.8.1895.

mined. The Ministers whom he was obliged to trust were too weak, and yet owing to his unfortunate ill-health he could not stay in Baroda. He watched—almost impotently—the gradual transfer of power from himself to the Residency, whose tools the Ministers seemed to be. We are slaves to the body, and it may be that if he had been in buoyant health he would have seen things differently. Yet in a later year he reviews the state of affairs dispassionately, when his views are no longer affected by ill-health, and the dark cloud that seemed to hang over him had disappeared. He had then been travelling in the Districts, and had greatly enjoyed occasional shooting expeditions. Here is his judgement delivered to Lord Reay in 1897:

‘When —— left all the elements of weakness rife in a Native State at the present day were in a state of pronounced and vigorous action. Unhappily of such schemes there is a trifling layer, first the old weakness of our people. There is the division into innumerable castes, further multiplied by division according to race, language, sects, and territories, not to mention those that are created by individual and official likes and dislikes. There is the lack of a broad public spirit and a disinterested and abiding love of genuine progress. There is the disposition to uncharitable censoriousness, which in a small society not of liberal mind naturally grows from too close an intimacy with another’s failings. There is the want of awe, generated by the highest authorities being too close and accessible to wrap themselves in the impressiveness of mystery and distance. There is a great desire to criticise on the part of the people like pleaders, journalists, raw young men who consider themselves educated by the degrees they may have got but not the tact, knowledge and temperance to criticise justly and usefully. There is the existence of numerous immunities, of privileges attached to particular castes and classes which a broader scheme of Government more or less modelled on the British must necessarily deal with, in order to equalise burdens.

Then there is the power of the nobles and influential officials, whose capacity of creating troubles and the new conditions has to say the least not diminished. There are weaknesses attaching to our society which the growth of Western ideas ought to have corrected but has not. They have on the contrary become exaggerated. Certain old elements of old order have been impaired without being replaced, and fresh weaknesses have been superimposed upon the old. For instance, the new ideas have loosened the old reverence for authority and have emphasised the influence of the Mahomedan system, which tended to measure the respect of the governing power by the extent of the physical force. Nowadays therefore our people have respect only for such orders as overawe them by a combination of great intellect and physical superiority. The fact is while the old ideas which were systematically and profoundly felt are fading, the new ideas have established themselves without being thought out, and, as is always the case with imperfectly assimilated notions, have been powerful to destroy but not unite and reconstruct. Thus the old weaknesses remain while the old strength is perfectly lost.’<sup>1</sup>

What may have been passing through the Maharaja’s mind when he wrote this rather vague, but none the less penetrating analysis, it is not easy to discover. His reference to the Agent in the very first words seems to imply that all the weakness, the revolutionary feeling, the change in outlook were somehow attributable to the Residency, and that if the native Government had been supported, instead of being made to play a subordinate part, things would have been very difficult. At the same time it is well to remember that in writing letters thoughts run on, and often stray by consecutive steps far from the original thesis. For at least two years a vigorous propaganda had been carried on against the British Government by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and his Poona friends. New ideas had been sedulously planted, especially in the minds of the

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 283, p. 217, dated 24.1.1897.

younger generation. The letter was written in January 1897, and only five months later the Poona campaign culminated in the murder of Lieutenant Ayerst and Mr. Rand. It would be strange if, when the great stronghold of the Marathas was the scene of fiery eloquence on platform and in the Press, and when revolt against established authority was daily being preached, some echo was not to be heard in a State where many Marathas are to be found. The tumults of British India do not reach the States in their violent form, but mutterings are occasionally heard, and to-day the tone of certain sections of the local Press is inspired by the free and sometimes unlicensed language of British Indian organs, even though its voice is as the cooing of doves beside the roaring of lions.

Nevertheless, if the whole change of outlook could not fairly be ascribed to the Residency, the Maharaja got the impression that Indian Princes were not trusted to look after their own affairs; and it is the burden of complaint through many letters.

‘You people have no imagination,’ said a valued Indian friend to me, and that, true or not as a general proposition, is true in our dealings with the Princes. The Government of India had many provocations; an apologist could not only make out a good case for the defence, but could carry the war into the enemy’s territory with arguments and instances that would take a good deal of answering. On the other hand it is possible—is it not?—that the Government of India did not see enough of the other side. They were served by honest and conscientious agents, who sometimes had, but sometimes had not, sympathetic vision for the difficulties of the ruler, and for the differences between the democratic system which they had learned to believe was political wisdom, and the autocratic system to which India itself was

accustomed. Much lip-service was paid to India's love of personal rule, but in the perfectly honest and sincere desire to befriend the people according to the light that was in them, they were apt to lose sight of the fact that under a system of personal rule the best way to befriend the people was to uphold a ruler who was quite evidently interested in his own folk. Thus far the counsel for the prosecution. Let those defend who will, and, as has already been said, there is, or may be, a perfectly good defence. It was, at any rate, the grievance of the Maharaja, and it was an attitude of which little was heard, because at that period Indian Princes were content to nurse their grievances in private, having, in fact, no outlet but representation to the Government of India which seemed to them futile, and ventilation in the public press which was certainly undignified. The Maharaja ably summed up his own point of view a generation ago :

‘On the top of this [the weakness of the people] come the imperfections of the political system. This seems to me by its character to be created more by a blind succession of historical events than by an intelligent adaptation to actual needs and existing conditions. Its effect has been to weaken the old bases of power without satisfactorily explaining them. To take some details, the ease with which the princes are made and unmade without much inquiry, or are compelled to temporarily transfer their powers to the political officer and rarely to their own servants, the small respect shown to their last wishes and dispositions, the manner in which their servants are rewarded with titles without the least reference to the Government which employs them, so that officers, really not well inclined to the State, can easily by ingratiating themselves with the Political officer at once aggrandise themselves and show the weakness of the State. It is obvious how all these are disintegrating elements which forcibly break the continuity of rule and destroy that sense which once existed among the people of the certain and abiding presence of the Raja and his



family. The system in short brings liberty to the subject and more accurately gives them the means of using it effectually but leaves no safeguards against their misusing it.<sup>1</sup>

And after a reference to such matters as the post, telegraphs, and railways, and the restrictions on salt, he strikes a more personal note when he speaks of the 'unsympathetic attitude of some political officers towards attempts at progress on original lines'.<sup>1</sup> He accuses the English of want of imagination, for copies and even bad copies of British models are tolerated, but any departure from them is suspect. And so with some bitterness he concludes that 'people wonder whether the old Rajas, who did nothing and were content as a rule with women and drink, were not individually better off than the new, who labour and worry themselves without after all being able to effect much that is worth effecting'.<sup>1</sup>

The Maharaja wrote under the impulse of warm feeling with a sense of futility; he has followed great ideals all through his life and he has never been able to realize them to the full. He cannot make the people what he would wish them to be—who indeed could?—and he feels keenly that all his striving after ideals has never been appreciated by the people, nor fully understood by the Government of India. Yet, after all, the hyperbole of his conclusion was not really warranted either then or now. How many of us have felt after a strenuous work which was not appreciated, still less rewarded, that those were wiser who through indolence or indifference did what was required of them, and no more? How many of us have felt that all our writing on the sand has in the end left no more trace than the blank spaces of others? Baroda, ever since the time when Sir Madhav Rao took it in hand, has had the reputation of being a well-ordered, well-governed, and progressive State. That it no longer stands out as it

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 283, p. 217, dated 20.1.1897.

used to, is because other States have come forward, not because it has gone back—just as the so-called decadence of English sport is due not to the English decline, but to foreign advance. That should be His Highness' reward and consolation. If he has not achieved all that he set his heart upon, he is amongst the few Princes who have given an example to all Indian Princes of how a State should be governed upon modern lines.

#### IV

Absence from Baroda, very often entailing a long stay in Europe, made it necessary to arrange for the administration, and it was here most of all that the Maharaja found himself in disagreement with the Resident. The General Council of State then consisted of the Dewan as President and seven members. Five of these eight constituted a quorum, and the subjects to be dealt with were enumerated in general terms. Ordinary subjects which did not fall within these terms were to be dealt with by sub-committees of not less than three, including the Minister. This, of course, put very large powers into the hands of the latter, though not so large as those originally contemplated, and it depended very much upon the character and personality of the Minister how far the Resident was permitted or invited to interfere. For the Maharaja in his official order says that the Resident has 'at my request' consented to take an immediate part in the administration, and, among other ways in which the power of the Dewan was curtailed, was an obligation laid upon him at his own risk to consult the Resident in any important matter. This could be variously interpreted, and, coupled with further obligations in specific matters, made the Resident, if the Dewan were weak, the virtual Ruler of the State. It is clear from many indications that the Maharaja did

not like these arrangements. It is to them that he alludes when he complains that his authority is being undermined and his prestige damaged, and that he has been forced to surrender his powers. Though officially he put a good face on it, and pretended that he had actually made the request, he chafed under the dictation: the request was made under pressure of *force majeure*, and the 'kind consent' was given at the behest of the Government of India.

But whether this arrangement worked satisfactorily or no, and whether the consent of the Maharaja was forced upon him or was willingly given, affairs took a more critical, if not acrimonious, turn, in the years that followed, when it appeared that the absence of the Ruler was becoming more frequent. The prejudice of Hindus against crossing the water was originally very strong, and was reinforced by those who undertook to interpret the religion. Nor had the charms of a cooler climate, whether in the Himalayas or the Nilgiris, made any particular appeal to the Princes. They stayed where they were, and governed their States, well or ill, according to their lights or their predilections. Although they did not conform to British Indian standards to the same extent as is now the case, for perhaps they had not learned the lesson of Sir T. Madhav Rao, that the State exists for the welfare of the people, and not for the gratification of the Prince, it was an undoubted advantage, all the more because the rule was personal and autocratic, that the Ruler should be in residence at his Capital. Maharaja Sayaji Rao was not blind to this advantage. In 1887, writing to Lord Dufferin he says: 'This will most unfortunately result in my absence from the favourite field of my labours. I hate the idea of an absentee Maharaja.'<sup>1</sup> And about the same time he confessed: 'the people do not like to see me run

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 28, p. 20, dated 16.1.1887.

about so much . . . though they do not know the reasons that compelled me to go: still, taking all in all, I cannot say that they are wrong'.<sup>1</sup> His health had, however, forced him to make these journeys, and he resented the attitude of the Resident, who seemed to be travelling outside his own sphere. A conversation took place in 1893 between His Highness and the Resident, in which, on the one side, it was urged that the Maharaja was compelled to travel for the sake of his health, and that the Resident had nothing to do with the internal administration, of which he would be kept informed by the Dewan; on the other, that the Resident was responsible to the Government of India for the peace of the country, and must be made fully aware of the details of arrangements, which must conform to the requirements of the Government of India. The weak point of the latter argument was at once seized upon: why, it was asked, should the Resident be kept informed of details of internal administration which could not possibly have any relation to the peace of the country? It was not denied that the Government of India was ultimately responsible for peace, but it was vigorously maintained that the intervention of the Resident in matters that did not, and could not, concern peace, vitally affected the well-being of an Indian State. The replies of the Resident were not calculated to ensure the accommodation of this clash of principles. When it was urged that the delegation of power by an Indian Ruler to one not his servant was hardly consistent with the integrity of Indian States, the answer was that 'the integrity and dignity of the Baroda State will best be secured by attention to the advice which the Government of India is ever ready to give when occasion demands'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., vol. i, No. 33, p. 24, dated 17.2.1887.

<sup>2</sup> Residency letter No. 4782, dated 27.4.1893, to the Minister of the Baroda State.

Here was a resounding phrase which, however, evaded the main issue; on the face of it, it meant practically nothing at all, since Baroda had not shown herself unready to accept the advice so offered. If it meant more than it said, it was merely a reiteration of the demand for details which was so resented; and the effect of it was not soothed by an insinuation in another letter, that 'delay is deliberately contemplated'. In fact the Resident was very angry. He evidently thought that there was a deliberate attempt to flout his authority, and the authority of the Government of India. The Maharaja for his part, though he did not use such hectoring language, was equally determined that power should not be given up, except in so far as was compatible with the prestige of the State or the accepted demands of the Indian Government. And so with much unfruitful wrangling the time glided away. The Maharaja departed for Europe, leaving arrangements pretty much as they were before, and the Resident who had 'kindly consented' to lend a hand in the administration, was left to his correspondence with the Dewan as the connecting link between himself and the Government of Baroda.

In 1893 the Maharaja wrote to Lord Lansdowne from Zürich. The letter, which has already been quoted, was pleasant and conversational, such as any man might write to a friend. Lord Lansdowne replied in a friendly tone, but showed unmistakably the anxiety he felt at those numerous excursions:

'I am strongly convinced that it is impossible for the Chief of a State like Baroda to carry on its administration from a distance, and there must be substantial delegation of authority while he is away. During the last seven years you have unfortunately been obliged to be absent from Baroda for close on four and a half years, and it is useless to conceal the fact that these lengthy absences have produced very unfortunate results.

... I am anxious, however, as far as possible to do nothing which would have the effect of impairing your position and authority as Chief of the State.' <sup>1</sup>

The pill was gilded by sympathetic references to His Highness's health, and by the suggestion that, so long as his health was bad, it was really in his own interests that he should for the time give up trying to rule. But a pill it was, and the Maharaja did not like it. He wrote a letter to the Viceroy accepting the inevitable, but making a wry face over it. The powers now delegated were more extensive. The Council was reformed, and was to consist of the Dewan, the two Naib (Assistant) Dewans, and the heads of the Revenue Department and the Army. Certain subjects were reserved to His Highness, but the Rules provided that even these might be delegated, and with certain exceptions, most of which are still in force, they were so delegated. The main difference—and it is a world of difference—between the procedure thus arranged and that now in force, is that the Resident is now completely eliminated from any share in the internal administration. This, of course, is what His Highness was aiming at all the time. Whether he could trust his Council was a matter between him and them; it was the only question that really arose. Quite recently he not only did not resent, but gladly welcomed a suggestion<sup>2</sup> that he might lighten his own burden by delegating increased powers to the Council. He had had opportunities of judging the capacity of his Ministers (and especially of the Dewan) for good government, and he was quite prepared to trust them, provided only that his people were not brought to look upon the Council as the real government, and upon himself as a mere figure-head who had lost all touch with,

<sup>1</sup> Fifth trip, letter dated 7.11.1893.

<sup>2</sup> It need hardly be said that this suggestion came from within the Council and not from the Resident.

and all authority in, the State. The case was entirely different when the representative of the Paramount Power was to take part in the administration. If the Viceroy was nervous lest the State should slide backward in the absence of its Ruler, the Maharaja was no less nervous lest the people should come to regard the Resident as the virtual Ruler, and to imagine that the whole Government of the State was dictated from Simla.

One cannot but sympathize with the Maharaja's difficulties. He knew himself to be a good Ruler, deeply interested in the welfare of his people. He had been told so by Viceroys themselves if his conscience wanted any such confirmation. He had introduced many reforms—so many that even his Dewan told him he was going too fast. But the doctors advised him to avoid the heat of Baroda, and he was forced to wander over India and Europe in search of health. He was certainly not seeking pleasure and amusement. He writes almost pathetically to his Minister (Oct. 1893) of his 'detestable health'. He consulted the doctors in London, who advised a longer stay in Europe than he had ever made, for though they had advised the same thing before, he had never taken their advice. He felt homesick, and missed the society of the Maharani; and his great ambition was to do good, and to 'make the most of our limited scope'. If the Maharaja had, like some other Princes, cared solely for his own amusement, he would probably have looked upon the Viceroy's admonitions with a certain petulant impatience, and his appeal to duty would have moved him only in so far as it interfered with his pleasure. But the Maharaja was not of that way of thinking. He has always been anxious to do his duty by his people. Throughout his tours in Europe he has always been on the watch for the institutions which he might plant in Baroda, and for ways and customs which might be brought to bear on the social

life of his own State. This preoccupation sometimes emerges in unexpected ways. On one occasion he had careful inquiries made in Paris as to the French method of controlling prostitution; on another he took note of English regulations concerning the hall-marking of silver. The insinuation hurt him that he was neglecting his duties as a Ruler, for he felt that to be unjust; yet his health was the primary consideration, and it is a fact that he is never long in Baroda without in one way or another feeling ill effects on his physical energies.

## V

For some time after this unpleasant controversy travel to Europe ceased. Between 1895 and 1900 the Maharaja either remained in the State or went no further afield than the hill-stations of the Nilgiris and the Himalayas. The year 1900 saw him once more in England, as much for the sake of the Maharani's health as for his own. She was obliged to undergo an operation, the very natural interest in which prevented the Maharaja from attending the Queen's garden-party at Buckingham Palace. He has never been so happy in England as on the European continent, but this time Her Highness's health tied him to London. He writes to his Minister:

"The climate of London is neither very bracing at this time of the year nor is it very salubrious. We are daily thinking of leaving this for a residence in the country where the air is likely to be purer and brighter. At times the heat has been immense here. . . . As Her Highness has not been able to get up and go about from her rooms, I could not naturally go to any climate which might have been beneficial to my health."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless he was glad of the opportunity of renewing friendship with many Englishmen whom he had met either in England or in India. His letters are written in

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. i, No. 511, p. 373, dated 8.8.1900.



happy ignorance of the trouble that was brewing for him in India. There is no doubt that the episode of 1893 had made him more reluctant to risk what he felt to be humiliation, in the shape of further lectures from the Government of India through the Resident. Not only did he not stir out of India for five years, but he expressly says that 'the feeling of uneasiness or worry', both as to the attitude of the Indian Government and as to the conduct of State affairs, made him postpone his journey to Europe, where Her Highness had to undergo a serious operation. It was, therefore, from his point of view, a singularly inopportune moment for the issue of the famous 'Curzon Circular' dated August 1900, which required the Princes to obtain the sanction of the Government before leaving India.

The issue of the Circular had been preceded by a speech at Gwalior in which Lord Curzon said:

'The Native Chief has become by our policy an integral factor in the Imperial organization of India. . . . I claim him as my colleague and partner. He cannot remain *vis-à-vis* the Empire a loyal subject of Her Majesty the Queen-Empress and *vis-à-vis* his own people a frivolous and irresponsible despot. He must justify and not abuse the authority committed to him; he must be the servant as well as the master of his people. . . . His figure should not merely be known on the polo-ground or on the race-course or in the European hotel. These may be his relaxations and I do not say that they are not legitimate relaxations; but his real work, his princely duty, lies among his own people.'<sup>1</sup>

The Gwalior speech did not attract much attention. It foreshadowed the Circular in general terms, but the latter was hardly couched in language suited to a 'colleague and partner'. The India Office cast a doubtful eye upon it, and it was not welcomed in even higher quarters. On

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Curzon*, by Ronaldshay, vol. ii, p. 89.

the other hand, King Edward mildly suggested that the language used was strong and that a friendly hint would have served the purpose better.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps just because he was a Prince himself he was jealous for the princely order, and in 1905, when the Maharaja proposed to be absent during the Prince of Wales's tour, and the Viceroy was prepared to veto the voyage, the King insisted that his liberty should not be so hampered. We are assured that, on the whole, 'the reception accorded to his (Lord Curzon's) action by the Press was favourable'. But seeing that the Indian State was, except to those whose business it was to know, a singularly unknown quantity, it is questionable whether the Press realized to the full the implications of these peremptory orders to our 'colleagues and partners', or the difficulties which they threw in the path of the Ruler.

The Circular was not, of course, directed against the Maharaja Gaekwar in particular, or against any individual, but as the Maharaja was on his sixth trip, and was actually in London at the time, it may well have seemed to have a particular application to his case. The Circular required every Indian Prince or Chief to apply for permission to leave India, early enough to enable the Government to use their unfettered discretion in giving or withholding sanction. It went on:

'The Government of India hold very strongly to the opinion that the first and paramount duty of a Native Prince or Chief lies towards his own State and people.'

The Supreme Government guaranteed security of tenure and were therefore entitled to claim

'that the ruler shall devote his best energies, not to the pursuit of pleasure nor to the cultivation of absentee interests or amusements, but to the welfare of his own subjects and administration.

<sup>1</sup> *King Edward VII*, by Sidney Lee, vol. ii, p. 365.

Such a standard of duty is incompatible with frequent absences from the State: even though these may be represented as inspired by the pursuit of knowledge or by a thirst for civilization. In proportion as a Chief becomes infected with these tastes and inclinations, so in many cases he is apt to be drawn further away from, instead of nearer to, his people. It is not denied that advantages may result to both parties from a widening of the range of knowledge of an intelligent Ruler and from the application to his local administration of the lessons acquired in the school of Western experience . . . but it cannot be denied that habits of restlessness and extravagance are even more likely to be inculcated in the oriental mind by a sudden change of environment.’<sup>1</sup>

The conclusion was embodied in four propositions:

- (1) Repeated absences from India would be regarded as a dereliction of duty.
- (2) The criterion was not private convenience but personal and public advantage.
- (3) Early renewals of such sanction were to be deprecated; such journeys should be far apart.
- (4) The effects of foreign travel upon character and habits were to be watched.

To the average English mind these sentiments were unexceptionable. What more lofty ideal could be put before the Princes than the welfare of their people and the prosperity of their States? How better could the Paramount Power discharge its obligations to the people of India than by putting some kind of restriction upon journeys undertaken solely for pleasure? What kinder office could it perform than to defend the Princes against themselves and to shield them from the unknown dangers of contact with the West, and especially with those Western vices which there had been too good reason to suppose had Siren attractions for them? The Circular professed to

<sup>1</sup> *Gazette of India*, supplement dated 25.8.1900.

establish no new principles, to introduce no innovations. It was intended, so the Resident protested, only to check the laxity of Local Governments who had been inclined to treat such matters as formal, and to report to the Government of India at so late an hour as virtually to deprive them of all discretion. But that is not how it struck the Maharaja. He fastened on the central idea, that the Princes could not leave India without the permission of the Viceroy, and that their request was to be accompanied by all sorts of annoying details. This he felt to be an unwarrantable interference with their liberty of action. It was certain to injure them in prestige and authority; whatever might have been the intention, and however the language could be explained, the one stark fact stood out to the Maharaja's mind—that it 'involved a serious alteration in the position and dignity of Indian Princes'.<sup>1</sup> 'We are all supposed to be Chiefs,' he exclaims, 'but we are treated as worse than paid servants.' He took higher ground than his own personal feeling. Such treatment he argued was calculated to do untold harm to the States: 'Cripple the position of the Raja, reduce the interest in the State, limit his freedom, and there must inevitably follow the disappearance of the individuality of the States.'<sup>1</sup>

In his perplexity he turned to two old friends, neither of whom was his subject or his servant. Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, who, it will be remembered, had been the Minister in the time of Malhar Rao, counselled such steps as would tend to eliminate all excuse for interference. In such a situation as Baroda was in, there was really nothing to be done except to walk warily. Government was after all not unreasonable if the case was properly stated, but it was better to *prevent* interference instead of fighting it; and the best way to do that was to employ an honest and

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Colonel Meade, dated 1.5.1903.

competent staff of officers willing and able to administer the laws.

Not very much could take definite shape from this advice. Very different is the tenor of a letter from B. M. Malabari, the social reformer of Bombay, and himself a native of Baroda. He writes sympathetically, for 'where shall we have such a fine State, such an enlightened and well-meaning Ruler?' But he writes frankly, and he does not mince matters:

'As I told you years ago, he (the Prince) is one of the many: and where the many give in, his resistance at every turn singles him out for suspicion. My advice is the same as before—yield in small matters, so that reasonable independence in matters of importance may not be mistaken for obstinacy or opposition for the sake of opposition. Even if he thinks he is sacrificing himself by his independence, he must remember that the law of self-sacrifice demands an adequate return in the shape of the *good of others*. For *whose good* is he suffering so much? Is it right, is it wise, or even expedient to give himself away to his adversaries and to make his life miserable by constant friction? I am afraid His Highness is too slow to put himself in the position of his English critics. "Here", they argue, "is a Ruler created by us, educated by us, by us placed in an exalted position, and he is doing everything he can to worry and thwart us and to set a *bad example to his brother Princes*."'<sup>1</sup>

That, he suggests, would be the view of the Government right or wrong, and some of the Maharaja's actions, far from showing that the view was wrong, tended to confirm it and to aggravate the tension. 'This last trip to England was a mistake, his staying over there after inviting the Viceroy was a worse mistake. . . . There may be enemies in the camp; but the Maharaja is his own worst enemy.'<sup>1</sup>

This was plain speaking with a vengeance. But looking back across the years between, who shall say that

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished Letters.

Malabari was wrong? The Maharaja was not merely an 'enlightened and well-meaning ruler'; he had proved himself to be a man of action and of wise action. His best friends cannot but be sorry that he surrendered the strength of his case by just that conduct which seemed to confirm the opinion held of him in high quarters. The Minister advised that the Circular be received in silence. The only points to which criticism could be usefully directed were the tone of it, and its publication broadcast for the general public to read. Those were exactly the points to which exception was taken in England, but the Minister, more diplomatic than his master, said plainly that no good would come of any protest. Nevertheless the protest was sent and the Minister proved to be right. The Government of India was inexorable and refused to withdraw or to modify the Circular. Was it right, was it wise, was it expedient thus to abandon the substance for the shadow? Suspicion, distrust, and annoyance were thereby engendered; the splendid work that had been done in Baroda State was discounted, and all that really mattered was sacrificed for what after all turned out to be a phantom. The reverberations of the controversy continued for some years, and helped to create the unfortunate atmosphere of which the Maharaja was the victim in after-times.

It is for this reason that it has been necessary to dwell at some length upon these unpleasant topics. The smoke of battle has long since drifted away. The Circular was in fact, never harshly applied, and a change of policy was foreshadowed by Lord Minto in a speech at Udaipur in 1909, which eventually took shape in 1920 when the more galling restrictions were removed, and the Princes were left practically free to follow their own inclinations. The State itself was running smoothly enough under a well-organized administration, and no doubt the Government

of India was aware that Baroda was ruled in a manner very different from that which prevailed in some other States. The sole contention was that it is not and cannot be good for any State that its Ruler should be so often absent, and for such long periods. More especially was this the case when the visits were to distant Europe. The Maharaja, on the other hand, strongly resented what he thought was a needless and officious interference, not only with his personal liberty of action, but with the internal government of his State. Neither side would give in to the other, and as usually happens in such cases the weakest went to the wall. The constant references to his health which extend over years, though honest enough and true in fact, may well have seemed insincere to those who saw that he returned to Baroda apparently well enough to carry on the administration, and who knew that for years he was able to stay in India, and even at his capital. It might naturally be asked whether Europe was the only remedy; His Highness had not shown any signs of a total inability to live in India.

The whole series of events was unfortunate. When the Maharaja said that he loved the State and people, and that nothing would please him better than to return to India at the earliest possible moment, he spoke no more than the simple truth. His mind was, as always, working on Baroda State; he has done much for it; he has practically made it what it is. And he has, he might well contend, done this because of his foreign travel and not in spite of it. It is possible that the Government of India was thinking of these activities when they referred in the famous Circular to the 'advantages that may result to both parties from a widening of the range of knowledge of an intelligent Ruler'. The Maharaja himself laid great stress on this. He maintained that a changed spirit had come over Baroda since he began to travel, that whereas men

had been content with their own narrow horizon, they were now more than eager to travel, and that even the country-side had begun to see good in institutions that were not their own. But, as Malabari said, he was slow to see the other side. Diplomatic situations are, as we all know, often governed by impressions, and the Maharaja in perfect honesty and simplicity of purpose was, it would seem, prone to overlook the possibility of misunderstanding, and the probable effect of his doings upon opinion in the Foreign Department at Calcutta.



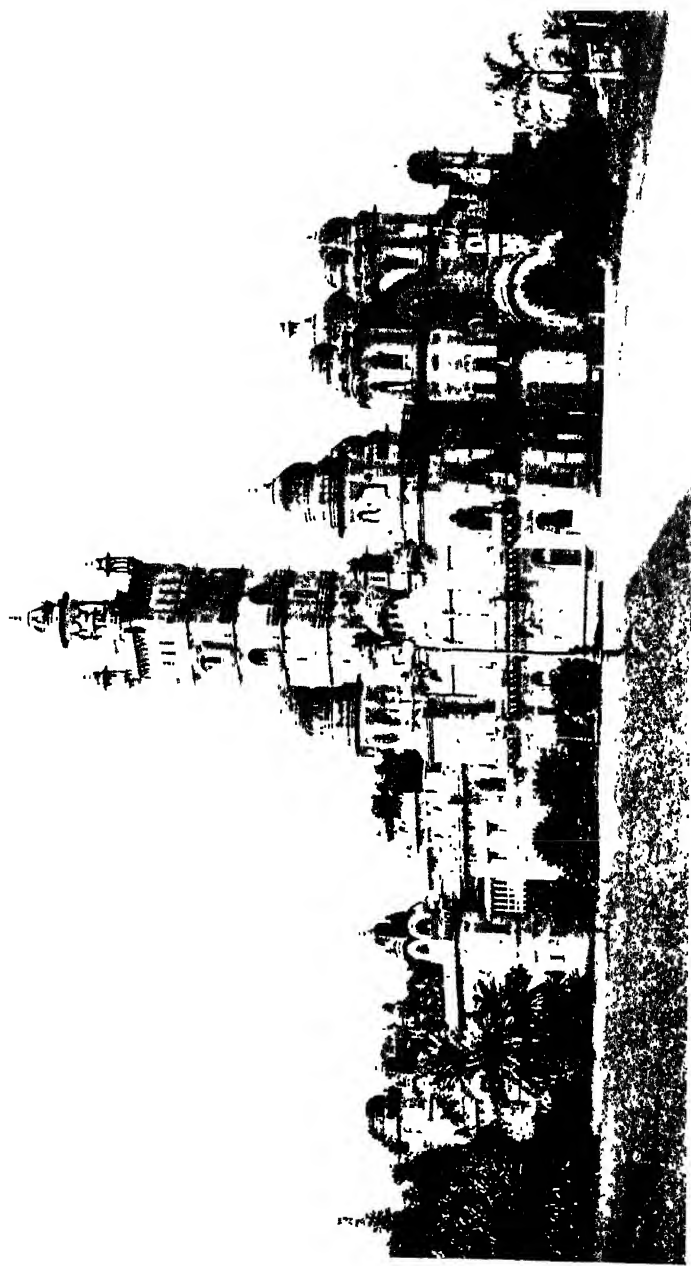
## *Chapter Nine*

### IMPERIAL QUESTIONS—DEFENCE

THE history of the origin of the Subsidiary Force and Contingent, and the later development of an analogous idea into the Imperial Service troops, has an interest that is not confined to Baroda. It reflects—at any rate in the sphere of defence—the gradual evolution of policy from a rigid abstention from any kind of interference with the then existing States (except only to the extent of a loan of mercenary troops), to the conception of a United India in which the States would have the privilege, as well as the obligation, of sharing in the common defence of the country. It reflects, also, the attitude of the Imperial Government, which, while acknowledging the sacredness of a treaty, simply disregarded such portions of it as the lapse of time and the changing conditions had rendered obsolete; and the attitude of the States which looks upon their Treaties as precious charters, and resents any interference with the terms by executive order, even though conditions may have changed. To the lay and uninstructed mind the logical course would seem to be to revise a treaty which was clearly obsolete; but that, for reasons which may have seemed good to both parties, or for no reasons at all, was not done; with the result that an unfortunate sense of injustice has arisen by no intentional act on the part of any one, but simply from the force of circumstances.

While the Moghul Empire was still in being, and the Maratha Confederacy was the dominant power in India, the Company was only concerned with the defence of its own factories against the aggression of one or other party in those turbulent times. But later on when the various chiefs had learned the value of European troops, and the Company had been induced to take a hand in





THE LAKSHMI VILAS PALACE, BARODA  
*(The Maharaja's principal residence in his capital)*

their quarrels, it drifted into the position of holding the balance of power. It was under no obligation to lend troops, and quite reasonably demanded a reward for their services. By the time of the Treaty of Poona, when the last of the Peshwas had lost much of the supreme power so ably wielded by his brilliant predecessors, the British were undoubtedly the predominant partner. They were in alliance with the Gaekwar, but accepted no responsibility for the maintenance of order in his dominions. This state of affairs, which had developed quite naturally as each step led to the next, finally took shape as a definite policy, called in political literature the policy of the Ring Fence. By this the Company left the various States severely to themselves, intervening only, as before, by the loan of troops to be paid for by the borrower, when it appeared that the threat to the State threatened also the security of their own borders.

This policy went through various stages of evolution and change, which need not here detain us, until it emerged into the conception of a United India in which the interests of the Princes and of British India were acknowledged to be identical. The Princes had in the meantime surrendered certain of their sovereign rights in exchange for the guarantee of protection against external and internal enemies. The idea of the Imperial Service troops seems to have sprung from the praiseworthy desire to give the Princes a definite share in the common defence of the country, and to knit them more closely into the structure of the Empire. It revived in effect the old Contingent but under a new name, and in more promising conditions. In the sequel, as we shall see, there were elements of weakness in the scheme, of which the Maharaja took full advantage, but the essence of it was that, as the Princes no longer paid for protection the burden of which fell upon the British taxpayer, it was

desirable that the Princes should, at some sacrifice to themselves, join in the common defence and so take one step towards the unification of India. The scheme could not come into force without the consent of the States, which of course acted independently of one another: it was accepted by some and rejected by others, so that Lord Curzon's idea of an Indian India joining as a whole with British India, according to their resources, came to nothing or, at any rate, was only very partially realized.

## II

The direct relations of the British Government with the Baroda State date from the year 1802. The then Gaekwar, Anand Rao, was a man of weak intellect, and the reins of Government were seized by his illegitimate half-brother, Kanhoji Rao.<sup>1</sup> Two parties immediately sprang up in the State. Civil War was threatened. But Ravji Appaji, the Minister of the former Gaekwar, espoused the cause of the rightful Maharaja, and implored the assistance of the British, who drove out the usurper and restored Anand Rao. This led to a treaty of alliance, and, probably owing to the disturbed state of the country and the anxiety of the Baroda Government to maintain order, to which task it felt itself unequal, it was arranged that Baroda should receive a force, known to the history of Baroda as the Subsidiary Force, consisting of 2,000 infantry and a company of artillery, for the maintenance of which, districts were ceded to the estimated value of Rs. 7,80,000 yearly. These arrangements were subsequently revised and incorporated in a definitive treaty of 1805, by which the force of infantry was increased to 3,000, the cession of territory being proportionately raised to an annual figure of Rs. 11,70,000. This

<sup>1</sup> Kanhoji Rao was the son of a Rajput mother. The marriage was legitimate, but the issue of it was debarred from the succession.

arrangement worked smoothly enough, but on the 14th July 1816 a dramatic event occurred which had momentous consequences for the Maratha Empire, and the reverberations of which altered the military arrangements already agreed upon by Baroda and the British. This was the murder by Trimbakji Daingle of Gangadhar Shastri, the Minister of the Gaekwar, who was deputed to Poona, under the guarantee of the British, to adjust some disputes with the Peshwa's Government.<sup>1</sup> To British ideas the murder of a man who was virtually an Ambassador is one of the unpardonable crimes, and the Baroda Government were also justly indignant at the crime committed upon its envoy. Trimbakji was surrendered, but escaped, and the degenerate Peshwa Baji Rao II did all in his power to protect the fugitive. The last Maratha war followed. Baji Rao surrendered and was sent a State prisoner to Bithoor, and the Maratha Empire fell in ruins.

The terms imposed a few months before upon the vanquished Peshwa included the renunciation of all claims of any kind whatsoever upon the Gaekwar, in consideration of an annual payment of 4 lakhs, and the grant in perpetuity of 'the Peshwa's rights in Ahmedabad and its dependencies north of the Mahi river', in return for a further annual payment of 4½ lakhs. These terms, which were eminently favourable to the Maharaja, seemed to the Bombay Government to justify a certain demand on the latter for military assistance. They pointed out that 'the whole responsibility for the security of Gujerat and of Kathiawar against external attack and internal commotion, devolves upon the British Government',<sup>2</sup> and as the expense which they had to bear was not less than that of the Gaekwar, they argued that the distribution of

<sup>1</sup> See Historical Introduction, p. xxxi.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of the Bombay Government to the Governor-General of India (the Marquess of Hastings, K.G.), dated 25.6.1815.

expenses and responsibilities should be made more equal. Moreover, although the Subsidiary Corps was well disciplined, it was inadequate to the demands made upon it, while the Baroda forces were 'a useless and burdensome establishment',<sup>1</sup> quite unfit to meet regular forces in the field, and oppressive to the country, by reason of the 'undefined emoluments'<sup>1</sup> of the officers in command of it.

The upshot was that the Subsidiary Force was increased by a battalion of infantry and two regiments of cavalry, for the maintenance of which the 'districts composing the perpetual farm of Ahmedabad',<sup>2</sup> yielding over 12 lakhs a year, were ceded. The Gaekwar was further required to maintain a force of 3,000 horse in a state of efficiency, according to the customs of the Baroda Government, which should co-operate with the Subsidiary Force; it was argued that Baroda would benefit by this arrangement, because it would then be equipped with a disciplined and efficient body of men, which it needed so urgently in the disturbed state of the country.

Needless to say, these arrangements proved fruitful of endless disputes. The Contingent, being under the Gaekwar's management, failed to come up to British standards, and drew constant remonstrances from the British officers. The Baroda Government, on the other hand, complained that the Contingent was being used without authority for police duty in some of the tributary states. Attempts at reform produced what was suspiciously like a mutiny, and the whole state of affairs was eminently unsatisfactory. Moreover, the Subsidiary Force ceased to exist as a separate unit; in 1830 it was merged in the Northern army of Bombay, and was admittedly used 'in our own (British) possessions'. The districts ceded by His Highness yielded a surplus over and above the military charges. Again, for

<sup>1</sup> Letter of the Bombay Government to the Governor-General of India (the Marquess of Hastings, K.G.), dated 25.6.1815. <sup>2</sup> Aitchison's *Treaties*, vol. viii, p. 77.

the purpose of keeping better order, a body of horse was raised, in addition to and independently of the Contingent, for which the Gaekwar was required to pay a further sum of 3 lakhs a year.

Thus the situation that arose out of the Treaty of 1805 with the various interpretations and subsequent arrangements agreed to by, or imposed upon the Maharaja, was this: he had obtained the protection of an organized and well-disciplined force, amounting eventually to four thousand infantry, and two regiments of cavalry, and a 'company' of European artillery. He had ceded districts, the revenue of which was estimated at over 25 lakhs, and which was actually more. He had further accepted another body of irregular horse which cost him 3 lakhs more, and he had consented to the employment of his troops in the Tributary States, thereby ratifying the irregular practice which had been in force for some years.

### III

It seems difficult to justify these proceedings. It is true that the Government was that, not of the Crown but of a commercial company, and it is pleasant to be able to record that on the assumption of the Government by the Crown, the last 3 lakhs relating to the Gujerat Horse were remitted to Maharaja Khande Rao in consideration of his loyalty to the British Government during the Mutiny, which also obtained for his widow the right of adoption, with what consequences to Baroda these pages show. But the whole series of events suggests that the Company's Government had repented of the terms of the Treaty of Poona in 1817, before the ink was dry upon the paper, and that the Bombay Government in particular wished to redress in its own favour the balance of advantages which had gone to the Gaekwar. It may be pleaded in extenuation that the Baroda



forces were of little use, either for war on the grand scale, or for the humbler purposes of policing the tributaries. Had the Maharaja then placed his troops upon a footing which would have made them a really serviceable force, had he handed them over to the British for training, there might perhaps have been no need for any increase in the Subsidiary Force. But pride and tradition stood in his way. The Maratha armies had been the terror of India, and had shaken the Moghul Empire to its foundations. Neither he nor his Sardars were apparently prepared to substitute an alien organization for the indigenous one which had conquered a great part of India for the victorious Marathas; and when the attempt was reluctantly made, the troops, as already mentioned, came near to mutiny. It was perhaps true that the British forces had done the lion's share of the work in reducing the country to something like order, and in particular had ensured the regular payment of tribute which was otherwise paid irregularly, partially, and only on compulsion. Such arguments might have been used, but as a matter of fact they were not. The Government of Bombay scarcely veiled the naked truth that they thought the Treaty of Poona had given the Gaekwar more than he had any right to expect by the polite euphemism of a readjustment of relations. The subsequent demand for an increase of the Subsidiary Force led to the cession of Ahmedabad, which not only nullified most of the benefits to the Gaekwar of the Treaty of Poona, but cut the Baroda possessions in Gujerat in two. The Bombay Government were quick enough to see the disadvantage in which Baroda was placed, but nothing seems to have come of the suggestion of the Governor, Sir James Carnac, that 'we can afford to be a little liberal to the Guicowar without being unjust to ourselves'.<sup>1</sup> Not only was no reparation made,

<sup>1</sup> A minute by Sir James Carnac, the Governor of Bombay, dated 16.1.1841.

but the absorption of the Subsidiary Force into the Bombay army led insensibly, as it was almost bound to do, to the practical repudiation of the Treaty terms which had stipulated for a force of 4,000 infantry, a battery (or company) of European Artillery, and two cavalry regiments. Baroda is now peaceful; it does not require such a force as that mentioned in the Treaty, nor perhaps, having regard to the improvement of communications with Ahmedabad to the north and Bombay to the south, any force at all. But Ahmedabad has developed into the second city in the Bombay Presidency, and the value to the British Government is out of all proportion greater than it was at the time of the cession. That its prosperity is due to a wise administration, and to what is known as the Pax Britannica, is undeniable. The fact, however, remains that the territory ceded for the upkeep of a force in Baroda is still in the hands of the British Government, while the force itself no longer exists, or only exists in such an attenuated and altered form as to be unrecognizable.

But the moment that the force lost its distinctive character by its absorption into the Bombay army, the Treaty ceased in effect to be operative. No doubt the measure was taken in the interest of efficiency, but it required no very acute mind, no very extraordinary vision, to see that when once the history of this force was obscured or obliterated by the lapse of years, it would be treated simply as a part of the army for whose upkeep the British Government were responsible and not the Maharaja. It does not seem to have occurred to any one at that time, that by depriving the Maharaja of the Subsidiary Force they were bound in equity to restore the territories ceded for the special purposes of its upkeep. An obscure passage occurs in a minute by Sir James Carnac, the Governor of Bombay, dated 16th January

1841, which somehow seems to justify the retention of the ceded districts. He wrote:

‘As for military charges, I may observe that by the arrangement of Sir John Malcolm, when he visited Gujerat in 1829, they were in some part provided for in these ceded districts by his having merged the subsidiary force into the Northern Division of the army, employing a portion of it in our own possessions.’

The meaning apparently is, that as the Bombay army has been increased by the addition of the Subsidiary Force, it was fair that the cost of it should still remain as a charge upon the ceded districts, but it is difficult to say what was passing in his mind when he wrote that cryptic sentence. The context shows that he was really pleading for a somewhat more liberal treatment of the Maharaja, and perhaps it may bear another meaning; but at any rate it seems clear that, even when the Governor was thus suggesting concessions, it never so much as crossed his mind that the action of Sir John Malcolm involved the retrocession of the district. When the Crown succeeded to the Company in 1858, this question does not appear to have been considered. In 1881 the Contingent disappeared, and the only relic of the Subsidiary Force is the Infantry Battalion still kept at Baroda, but the districts ceded for the maintenance of the force are still British districts, and not one rood has reverted to His Highness.

A few words will suffice to bring the story of the Contingent to an end. During the whole of its existence it was one continual source of bickering between the two Governments. The British officers were constantly irritated by its inefficiency and their powerlessness to improve it; the Maharaja was equally incensed by British interference with what he considered to be the management of his affairs. By degrees it degenerated from the semblance of a military, into an inefficient police force, from

that again into a kind of auxiliary force engaged in miscellaneous duties, until finally it was disbanded, in consideration of a sum of  $3\frac{3}{4}$  lakhs, to be paid to the British for policing effectively the tributary districts.

#### IV

Now when the forces of the Company were lent to a native Prince it was, as we have seen, on the basis of value received. And where the exchequer could not pay in cash, the cession of territory was demanded. It was thus that the British came into possession of the Kaira district and of Ahmedabad farm, which had fallen to the Gaekwar in the settlement made with the Peshwa. And when the Subsidiary Force was merged in the Bombay army, it was open to the Imperial Government to argue that it remained a force in being, though it was no longer a separate unit. Times had changed. The essence of the Treaty was that the Government should keep up a sufficient force to maintain order in Baroda; in times of peace the troops were to be stationed there, and in times of disturbances in India at least a part of them. The introduction of modern weapons, the advance in efficiency, the expansion of railways and other means of communication, had made the numbers mentioned in the treaty immaterial. If the letter of the Treaty were demanded, and the numbers maintained, it was logical that they should be armed with the weapons in use at the time of Waterloo. The whole Subsidiary Force would in such conditions be helpless before a force one-tenth of its numbers but properly armed; because the letter of the Treaty is now obsolete, the Imperial Government is justified on grounds of efficiency to maintain a force which is equivalent in fighting strength to the force of a century ago. And since they have thus maintained the spirit of the Treaty, it is only fair that the obligations of the Baroda Government should

likewise be observed. And those obligations include the cession of the districts. The secrets of the Imperial Government are well kept, and the historian can only guess at a possible line of argument. The case for the Baroda Government is this: in the first place the Subsidiary Force was meant for a special purpose which has long ago disappeared. The territories were ceded only as a substitute for cash, which could not be found otherwise. The Gaekwar's share of the city itself was exchanged for other more convenient territories.<sup>1</sup> The districts, at any rate, should have been returned to Baroda at any time when it could be shown that it could pay cash; for whatever hard bargain a commercial company might have driven, taking advantage of the weakness and necessity of the other side, a great Government should be guided by principles of equity, and not by the strict letter of the law. The iron fist of a Company may grasp its money-bags without loss of dignity. Is it the part of the British Government to appear in such a role? If it be argued that the Treaty is out of date, let it go altogether, and with it the right to the ceded districts which rests upon it. Or again, can it be contended that the Subsidiary Force still exists when it has been merged in the regular army of the Government of India? If only a portion of the original force exists as a distinct entity, does this not involve at least a partial restoration? And, granted that the modern soldier is worth much more than the old one, let some ratio be established between the two. At one stage, when the territories yielded less than the stipulated income, Baroda had to cede more territories. Should there not be restitution when the balance is on the other side? But the whole question is really governed by the radical change of policy. So long as the Imperial Government declined responsibility for any State there

<sup>1</sup> Supplement to the Definitive Treaty of 1817.

might be some justification for maintaining the force out of the revenues of that State, since they were earmarked for the special purpose of its protection. But when they accepted the general responsibility in exchange for surrender of sovereign rights, that justification vanished. The Subsidiary Force is, in fact, indistinguishable from the Indian army; the *raison d'être* no longer exists; and the Imperial Government have already received value in return for protection. By keeping the ceded districts they are therefore getting payment twice over for the same thing, and though it is true that the districts have increased enormously in value, partly owing to the orderly government, partly to the maintenance of general peace, and partly to the progress of the country and the action of private enterprise, the Government cannot take advantage of the natural evolution of progress, neither can it be shown that the place would not have prospered equally under the Baroda Government.

Such is roughly the case for retrocession, whatever may be the case of the Imperial Government. The Maharaja feels that he has not been fairly dealt with, and it was to transactions such as these that he refers when he derides the optimism of those who supposed that Okhamandal would ever be returned to Baroda. Other States have supported auxiliary forces but on a system of cash payments; others again have yielded territories, but they have lost them, not on this account alone, but owing to their resistance to the British power in the field. Baroda has always been a loyal State. It has supported the British army against the Peshwa; it took part in the wars against the Pindaris; and it stood by the British during the storm of the Mutiny. It seems to the Maharaja, as he sees the case, very hard that, as the price of loyalty, the State should be deprived of territories

which were ceded for a specific purpose. It may be conceded that, having regard to the equities of the case, the Maharaja has grounds for dissatisfaction, and that it is in no unreasonable spirit that he deplures his lost districts.

## V

In April 1904 the Government of India raised the question of the contribution of the States to the scheme of Imperial Service Troops on a more systematic basis. The origin of the scheme was the voluntary offer by many of the Princes of money, or men, or both, for the defence of the Empire, more particularly in connexion with the Russian scare of 1885. The scheme took shape in 1889. The contingents raised were voluntary and unsolicited. They were manned and officered from the inhabitants of the States themselves. The control and command of the troops remained with the Prince, and the only share which the British Government had in them was the appointment of a few British officers under the British Imperial Government, whose duty was confined to instruction, inspection, and advice. The experiment had proved successful. Imperial Service Troops, that is to say, troops belonging to the States which did not form part of the regular British Indian Army, had shown continuous progress and had done yeoman service in the frontier campaigns, besides forming an efficient reserve police force for the maintenance of order in the States themselves. During Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty they had been used overseas, in China and Somaliland, where, in some cases, the Chiefs themselves had ridden at their head. There were, however, so the Government of India alleged, certain drawbacks. It was diplomatically suggested that 'difficulty has sometimes been experienced in reconciling the high standards naturally exacted by the inspecting officers with the more modest requirements of

the Durbars',<sup>1</sup> which, in plain English, meant that the Chiefs themselves did not relish the maintenance of a force at great expense, which in normal times was not wanted, and which was far more highly trained than they themselves thought necessary. Moreover, the corps had remained stationary in numbers and the burden fell very unequally among the States, very few of which had contributed under the voluntary system.

Lord Curzon therefore argued—and he enlisted the views of some of the Princes in support of his argument—that it would be in the interests both of the Princes themselves, and of the Paramount Power, which were in fact identical, if the States were to acknowledge 'the obligation—subject to the conditions I have named—of expending a certain proportion of the gross revenues . . . in furthering the cause of Imperial Defence'.<sup>1</sup> He laid down 'the unassailable proposition'<sup>1</sup> that the Princes shared equally with British India the advantage of the British protection, and there was no reason why the people of British India should shoulder the lion's share of the burden. It was owing to British protection that the revenues of the States had increased three and even ten-fold. The Russian menace was still formidable, and it concerned the States every whit as much as it concerned British India. The scheme promised an army ready at all times for the defence of India, much in the same manner as the forces of the combined German Princes who then constituted the German Empire, were ever held efficient and ready by those Princes, and at the disposal of the German Emperor.

Upon these main proposals Lord Curzon invited a frank expression of opinion. An unfavourable reply was more acceptable than an untrue one, and there was some

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Lord Curzon to H.H. the Maharaja Gaekwar, dated 27.4.1904.



danger lest some of the Princes, in their desire to please the Viceroy, should subordinate their real feelings to a politic complaisance. And since the replies would probably be very various, he proposed to submit the whole question to a Conference of the Princes at Ajmer.

Baroda, under Maharaja Sayaji, had not joined the scheme. She had with other Princes made a voluntary offer in 1885 for that occasion only, but when certain people pressed His Highness to join the Scheme of 1889 as a diplomatic gesture, he declined. The suspicions which the possibility of British intervention always aroused in his mind were awakened by the proposal to employ British inspecting officers. He was always on the watch for the thin end of the wedge, and he was not attracted by the Greek gift of efficiency with the corollary of British supervision. He would rather be master in his own house and did not want a lion to watch it, if the lion involved a keeper. Nevertheless, while keeping complete freedom of action, he showed his general desire to co-operate on more than one occasion.

The request of the Viceroy for a frank expression even of unfavourable views, and the further suggestion for a Conference of Princes were cordially acknowledged, but as he said in the personal letter to the Viceroy which enclosed a lengthy memorandum, dealing with the subject in all its bearings :

‘As an individual, I might not have cared what particular form might be adopted or obligation incurred but been glad to take the first road that offered itself to show my loyalty and goodwill; as a Ruler, I was bound to consider every side of the question and most of all the interests and claims of my State, being responsible to the future for what I might pledge it to or any sacrifice I might make of its just interests.’<sup>1</sup>

Of his willingness to assist the British Government in

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. ii, No. 787, p. 568, dated 1.8.1904.

its hour of need, he was to give ample proof in the Great War. It was no unwillingness or hesitation, as he assures the Viceroy, which had caused an unfavourable reply, but a sincere conviction that the plan was unsuitable. It represented the views of the Maharaja in Council, for he had had anxious consultations with his Ministers on the subject.

The value of British protection had been put in the forefront of the Viceroy's letter, and he had asked why British India should bear the brunt of supporting an advantage which was common to all. But the Maharaja pertinently reminded the Viceroy that the price of protection had already been paid. The States surrendered their 'international status and the most important rights of sovereignty, accepted certain limitations and restrictions in their internal administration, and their former unhampered dealings with their subjects, and consented to live a subordinate and circumscribed existence'.<sup>1</sup> The principle of moral obligation ought not to be applied to the States, since it is not applied to the Colonies.

And, it was further argued, apart from the fair exchange which had already been made, the acceptance of the obligation of defence on the one side, and the surrender of sovereignty on the other, the States maintained subsidiary forces, and for their maintenance contributed in the shape of money or cessions of land, and although these subsidiary forces have been merged in the British Indian Army, they remain as a permanent contribution to Imperial Defence. Baroda itself had suffered in this way. In the early days, even before the last Maratha War of 1818, lands had been ceded to the value of 24 lakhs, and the revenues of them must have at least doubled since that time. The Memorandum drives the point home:

'These cessions, it will be perceived, were made as full

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 575, dated 1.8.1904.

consideration for the protection to be afforded to the Baroda State as a result of alliance.’<sup>1</sup>

The contention is, in fact, incontrovertible. It is strange that so able a man as Lord Curzon, whose impress the viceregal letter bears, overlooked so obvious a retort. The strength of the reply lay in the first and more general part; the allusions to the specific sacrifices of Baroda opened up an endless vista of unprofitable wrangling on the subject of value received. It was, however, beyond controversy that cessions had been made in 1817 when an increase of the Subsidiary Force was agreed to—more or less under pressure—by the then Gaekwar.

But apart from these specific contentions, the Government of Baroda found a more insuperable objection in the anomalous character of the plan. The German analogy it conceived to be singularly unfortunate, for ‘the German military system to which His Excellency alludes is an entirely harmonious and intelligible conception: the State Contingents are real units of the Imperial German Army, and form with it a single model under a single control, the State control in the three larger States being petty and nominal, in the rest nil’.<sup>2</sup> What just comparison could be made between such an army and the Imperial Service troops, which were designed to be both State troops for the purposes of the State, and Imperial troops as units of the British Army? Such a system, it was urged had broken down in the past, and would break down again; it would lead to friction, to dissatisfaction, to the displeasure of the Government of India, and to the reluctant submission of the State.

The Maharaja seized the opportunity of entering a plea for what he has greatly at heart, the improvement of his own army, which has hitherto been placed under such

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. ii, No. 787, p. 578, dated 1.8.1904.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii, No. 787, p. 583, dated 1.8.1904.

Imperial restrictions as to make it almost entirely ineffective except for parade and show :

‘The distrust of Native State troops which dictated this policy [of discouragement of effort] was it seems the result of past impressions created by certain outward circumstances, but circumstances have now greatly altered, as the creation of the Imperial Service troops shows, and the feeling is surely a little out of date. At any rate if the Government of India desires to institute a policy of military co-operation, the first condition of success is the substitution for distrust of a trust, not partial and qualified as now, but entire and ungrudging. The rational utilisation of the military resources of the State would then be possible ; and it would be a better policy than setting apart special corps for Imperial Service and leaving the rest ineffective.’<sup>1</sup>

Singularly prophetic was the remark that the true solution is the admission of Indian officers, equally with British, to Woolwich and Sandhurst. Such an assertion, a commonplace now, must have seemed chimerical twenty-seven years ago, if it had not been in the nature of an *obiter dictum* which attracted no attention.

Nor was the military the only aspect, and the Viceroy came in for further criticism on the subject of the German analogy. For while the military differences between the State contingents in Germany and those in India was sufficiently marked, even more marked was the difference in political relations. The relations in the German Bund were well defined, and disputes had to go before the Federal Council (Bundesrath); the relations of the States with the Government of India are ill defined, and their interpretation rests with the Government of India, the States ‘having no voice in the matter’. Moreover, the States of Germany are represented both in the Reichstag and on the Bundesrath; the Princes of India are excluded from Imperial deliberations, and are ‘practically considered

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., vol. ii, No. 787, p. 587, dated 1.8.1904.

as separate from the Empire'. In the light of later developments such as the establishment of the Chamber of Princes, and in 1928 the appointment of the Butler Committee to examine the relations between the Indian Government and the States, the argument is worth a full quotation:

'The creation of the new obligation proposed would seem therefore to demand the concession of the corresponding privilege, a recognized voice in the councils of the Empire. The privilege is the natural corollary of any general military confederation and would alone justify the creation of new burdens. If therefore closer co-operation is required it should be accompanied by a thorough rearrangement of the relations between the States and the British Government. Such a rearrangement would not only put military co-operation on its proper basis but have the further advantage of removing the defects of the present system—its one-sided character basing the decision of all matters on the will and judgement of one party to the relations; the consequent insufficient consideration and dwarfing in importance of the interests and sentiments of the other side: the hampering of the sense of free action: the uncertainty engendered by the absence of a clear system or fixed principles, tending towards paralysis of action; by all which the springs of zeal and interest in Princes are slackened and put out of gear. Let the States be given a voice in Imperial matters and questions between States and the Supreme Government, and a responsible autonomy in their internal administration; let them have a share not only in the burdens of Empire but in its privileges and advantages; they may then be induced to accept a reasonable share of the military expenses either in men or money.'<sup>1</sup>

## VI

Nothing seems to have come out of Lord Curzon's proposal, so far, at any rate, as Baroda was concerned. The idea was quickly dropped, and things went on as before, until a general revision of the scheme was undertaken

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. ii, No. 787, p. 589, dated 1.8.1904.

after the Great War. The interest of the episode lies neither in its origin nor in its outcome, but in the many phases which it shows of the Maharaja. His sturdy independence was encouraged by the Viceroy's own entreaty to reject a scheme which a more courtly and pliant administration might have found it convenient to accept. His many letters to European friends, which indeed form the bulk of the whole collection, his constant travels to Western countries and intercourse with Western friends, his employment of Europeans as officers in his State, and his choice of them as guardians, tutors, or companions to his sons—all prove that the Maharaja is very far from racial jealousy. But jealousy he has of another kind—jealousy of his prerogatives and for his beloved State. All through his career he has never ceased to resent what he considers to be the undue interference of the Paramount Power, while acknowledging its legitimate and just intervention under Treaty rights. The employment of Europeans as officers of his State under his own immediate control, is very different from the introduction of Europeans responsible only to the Supreme Government, and unless they are forced upon a Ruler by superior commands which the State is too weak to disobey, he has always looked with disfavour upon any scheme which involves the introduction of such men even in an advisory capacity.

But although this factor was distasteful to him, there were other parts of the scheme which were equally opposed to his cherished views. He is very fond and proud of his army. It is in every respect but one, a well-found, well-drilled corps, and the position of the Senapati or Commander-in-Chief is emphasized by his seat at the ceremonial Durbars next to the Dewan, the responsible head of the administration, and above the nobles and the Executive Council, whose orders in administrative matters he is bound to take. The one point in which the army is lacking

is, of course, the vital one of armament, and no one knows it better than the Maharaja. On great occasions, such as the processions through the town and at public arrivals of His Highness, his soldiers make a brave show, the Guards on grey horses, with lances and fluttering pennons, the cavalry on bays in orderly ranks, the infantry marching in orthodox column, and all in the neat but picturesque uniforms that suit the dark complexions so admirably. But there it ends. Every one knows that in presence of a real enemy, properly armed with modern weapons of precision, these brave lines would be as helpless as so many school-boys. It could be remedied. The choice before the Maharaja is to arm his soldiers, or to retain his own control intact, and rather than surrender the latter and accept the British conditions of supervision by British officers, he prefers that his regiments should be ill armed. Hence his pleading with the Viceroy for a policy of trust; hence his contention that the Empire would be better served by arming the entire forces of the State, rather than a portion of them which would become a *corps d'élite*, and excite the jealousy which such a corps is sure to awaken.

But the core of his reasoning is to be found in the longest of the extracts. The Maharaja hates a sham. He and his belong to the real India, the Indian India, which has come down to them through long lines of ancestors and the vicissitudes of history. He is glad to be left alone with such limited scope, as he puts it, as conditions allow, and he resents strongly any infringement of his rights. But why, he asks, should Indian India be shut out from the Councils of the Empire, and eternally subordinated to British India as a thing of no account? Why, if the States' interests are identical with those of British India, are they to have 'no voice in the matter'? Why, if they are allies in treaty with the Imperial Government, is the one party

to dictate, while the other can only be heard in ineffectual protest?

His dreams have partly come true. New schemes have come into operation, though still saddled with the condition of the loan of British officers for training the troops. Sandhurst has been thrown open to a limited number of Indian officers. A Chamber of Princes has been established, both for the purposes of conferring upon matters affecting the States as a whole, and for discussion of matters of Imperial policy. As these words are written, the federation of British India and the States is being formulated by the Round Table Conference.

Many grievances—fiscal and military—be they real or be they fancied, remain, but the attitude of the Imperial Government has changed greatly. Lord Curzon claimed the Princes as his allies and partners. Never—at any rate since the Crown took charge of India—has there been a Viceroy who so obviously claimed to be Dictator. His conduct towards the States was of a piece with his conduct towards all India. Sincerely anxious to live on neighbourly terms with the Princes, indefatigable in his labours for the welfare of India, he was dominated by a passion for moulding both the one and the other after his own pattern. That that pattern may have been excellent is nothing to the point; in reaching after efficiency he offended principles more important than efficiency, and it would seem that by imposing his will upon the States he aroused a resentment (not always expressed) which could only have been surpassed by actual annexation. When the Maharaja Sindhia received Lord Minto's Circular on sedition, it is recorded of him that he breathed a sigh of relief over what seemed to him a special mark of confidence, which announced the dawn of a new policy. It was surely the irony of fate that suspicion of the Maharaja should have risen to its height



during the Viceroyalty of two men who were universally respected, if not loved, by all the Princes.

This unpopularity was, however, only the culmination of a growing dislike, which had become manifest in Lord Curzon's time. In large things as in small, the Maharaja had ventured to oppose the imperious Viceroy, and though he had every right to say what he thought and often had reason on his side, imperious dictators do not like to be thwarted or to admit mistakes; least of all do they relish a refusal of obedience which they have no power of enforcing. There was no question of resentment over any specific matter; still less of any unreasonable carping at the British Government as such. The Maharaja who could fearlessly criticize could also handsomely praise, and on many occasions he bore testimony to the tenacity, the enterprise, the capacity of Englishmen in India; and praise from a fearless critic is always more worth having than praise which is akin to flattery. But the cumulative effect of these various disagreements was to earn the Maharaja the reputation of being difficult and intractable, and in the light of that reputation even the most innocent actions became suspect.

## *Chapter Ten*

### IMPERIAL QUESTIONS—FISCAL

THE peculiar relations of the Indian States with the Suzerain Power are probably without parallel in the world. When the East India Company first came to India they came as peaceful traders, not only with no thought of conquest, but with a genuine desire to avoid all entanglements which would interfere with their primary object of making money. The Moghul Emperor at Delhi was recognized as the lord paramount, and the authority of his various lieutenants and tributaries was respected as the government by law established. But wars were frequent in the country, and when the great Shivaji raised the standard of revolt in the latter part of the seventeenth century, and the Marathas had begun to hammer at the throne of Aurangzeb, the period of disintegration may be said to have begun. The Moghul power declined, and the Maratha Confederacy succeeded to the Empire, but the eighteenth century had grown old before either party could claim the unquestioned supremacy. The rivalry of the French in Southern India, the treatment of the Company's servants in Calcutta, the requests of the various combatants for European help and European alliance, as well as the law of self-preservation—all drew the Company insensibly into the entanglement they had wanted to avoid. The history of British India is a twice-told tale. The Company advanced in power and in territory: by conquest, by annexation, by the deposition of Princes, by the application of the doctrine of lapse British India was formed; the States, as we know them to-day, remained as the reward of loyalty, or as the outcome of expediency, but chiefly as the result of treaties and alliances which the British were bound in honour to respect.

We are not concerned with the rights and wrongs, with the justice or injustice, of the evolution of the modern map of India. The paramount position of England gradually became unquestionable. The relations of the supreme Government with the States rested, broadly speaking, upon two fundamental principles: the absolute control of the one over foreign relations, and the absolute control of the other over internal affairs. In return for the surrender of the sovereign rights of making war and peace, and of negotiation with a foreign power, the States have accepted the British protection, not only against foreign invasion, but also against internal rebellion and the aggression of other States. On the other hand, the Princes administer their dominions according to their desire. They are—in theory at any rate—free to make laws or not to make them, to levy taxes, to set up such machinery of justice as may seem good to them, and to exercise the right of patronage and to admit their subjects to a share in the administration to any extent or to none.

Sir William Lee Warner has pertinently pointed out 'the failure of history to supply any precedent, or mark out any track for the political task which the British have undertaken in India'.<sup>1</sup> The result has been that policies have varied, very often with the personality of the Viceroy, not necessarily tending in a uniform direction, one stage being sometimes even the reverse of its predecessor. Dalhousie's doctrine of lapse was abandoned by Canning; to Lord Curzon's doctrine of uniformity of treatment, Lord Minto opposed the idea of special treatment according to the circumstances of each; Lord Hastings questioned the right to interfere in the States, whatever might be the degree of misrule: 'Where is our right to determine that the amount of the evil is such as to demand our

<sup>1</sup> *The Native States of India*, Sir William Lee Warner, p. 8.

taking the remedy into our hands? . . . Were such a pretence allowable, a powerful State should never want colour for subjugating a weak neighbour.' But Lord Northbrook did so intervene, as we have seen, in the classic case of Baroda, and the Gaekwar was deposed. This particular view seems to have arisen from the theory that the Government of India are responsible for the general welfare and prosperity of all the people of India, both in the British Dominions and in the States, partly because it was felt that the Paramount Power could not look on with folded hands while misgovernment was patently going on, and partly because an exasperated people were sure to rebel in time, and the Indian Government had made itself responsible for the maintenance of order. This view was held as early as Lord Amherst's Viceroyalty (1823-8) when Sir Charles Metcalfe, an outstanding name in British India, wrote:

'We have become the paramount State in India. In 1817 it became the established principle of our policy to maintain tranquillity among the States of India . . . and we cannot be indifferent spectators of anarchy therein without ultimately giving up India again to the pillage and confusion from which we rescued her.'<sup>1</sup>

And so, when Malhar Rao reminded the Viceroy that he was bound by treaty to help him in putting down rebellion, Lord Northbrook replied that he could not possibly employ British troops for the purpose of prolonging misrule.

The British Government, however, neither desired the extinction of a State nor the deposition of its ruler. The only alternative to annexation, in the case of glaring misrule, was the removal of the Prince, and this is now the accepted policy. But since such drastic steps are neces-

<sup>1</sup> *The British Crown and the Native States*, p. 41.

sarily taken with reluctance, a considerable amount of rope is allowed to the Ruler in the shape of warnings, or advice, or remonstrance. It is clear that in such circumstances much is left to the discretion of the Resident: a blundering tactless man will, in all honesty of purpose and sincerely anxious to protect the people, interfere in various measures, which are not necessarily oppressive or unjust, but which are simply not to his liking, forgetting that by attracting the people to himself, he is undermining the prestige and authority of the Prince; a tactful and forbearing Resident, realizing that Indian ways are not always English ways, and that his role is that of an onlooker, at any rate until evil tendencies begin to show themselves, will be content with here a hint and there a word, but without overt intervention anywhere. The Maharaja, perfectly conscious of his own sincerity of purpose, never ceased to resent the interference of the former, and was always on excellent terms with the latter. He abhorred the attitude of distrust in the administration which forced the Resident upon him during his periods of absence abroad.

The States take their stand upon the Treaties and would limit the right of the British Government to intervene in internal affairs to specific purposes under the provisions of the Treaties. Lord Reading laid down his conception of the right of the Paramount Power in a now famous letter to the Nizam. He claimed that the supremacy of the British Government in India 'is not based only upon Treaties and engagements but exists independently of them', and that it is 'the right and privilege of the Paramount Power to decide all disputes that may arise between States, or between one of the States and itself, and even though a Court of Arbitration may be appointed in certain cases, its function is merely to offer independent advice to the Government of India with

whom the decision rests'.<sup>1</sup> Thus, even in political matters, the blessed word efficiency is for ever at war with the blessed word sovereignty.

## II

But the political issue is sharp and clear-cut compared with the economic issues that arise, and the doctrine that the Government of India shall be the sole judge in 'all disputes that may arise', has caused a good deal of discontent among the Princes. The political issue—the question of the deposition of a Prince, the restoration of territory, the intervention of the Resident—becomes rarer and rarer as the States have advanced upon lines more in conformity with modern demands. In the case of Baroda it is unthinkable. Whatever may have been the colour of the cloud of unpopularity under which the Maharaja fell between 1906 and 1912, nobody ever doubted his goodwill towards his people, or his intense interest in his State; every one admitted that Baroda was well governed. The restoration of territory is an isolated issue, but no grounds remain for general intervention by the Resident or by any one else. The economic issues, on the other hand, are of everyday occurrence. In the time when the treaties were drawn up they were comparatively simple, but with the expansion of the railway systems and the growth of the ports, the economic system of India tends to become more and more closely knit, and the States and British India react more and more upon one another. For the purpose of securing continuity of railway management and jurisdiction, and of a postal and telegraph service, the Indian Government have insisted, by persuasion which almost amounts to a command, upon retaining control in their own hands; the British currency has been adopted by

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-9, p. 57.*

nearly all the States in the general interests of trade and industry. But with the increased facility of communications, both by land and sea, complicated fiscal questions arose, in which the Indian Government frankly intervened for the protection of their own revenues. In 1877 pressure was brought to bear upon Baroda to make the cultivation of opium a State monopoly. Sir Madhav Rao consented, but was very doubtful of his own wisdom:

‘I must, however, confess that the new arrangements with regard to the cultivation of opium in Baroda territory were agreed to by His Highness’ Government with considerable misgivings: we would fain have consented to less drastic measures; as it is, we have in deference to the wishes of the British Government adopted the scheme indicated above, though it cannot but be distasteful to our ryots and merchants.’<sup>1</sup>

Whatever losses, if any, were brought about by this arrangement, they were dwarfed when in 1913 the Home Government, yielding to the pressure of the missionary element, consented to stop all export from India to China. In the words of Lord Irwin, this was a ‘great self-denying ordinance, whereby India sacrificed an annual revenue of four million pounds sterling’,<sup>2</sup> and in that self-denying ordinance the Indian States were obliged to take a hand. Latterly the League of Nations has asked the world to give up opium smoking, and again—in the words of the same Viceroy addressed to the Chamber of Princes—India, in assenting to this policy, has given ‘an example of unselfish idealism’. He pleaded for general co-operation. He asked the Princes, who had so nobly responded in the War, to ‘come forward and take their place beside us in

<sup>1</sup> *Baroda State Administration Report*, 1877-8, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> *Opium Selections*, vol. iv, pp. 80-2.

another Great War—the war against drugs which inflict damage so baneful and insidious upon the character and physique of the human race'.<sup>1</sup>

The Baroda Government did not rise to these heights of idealism. They contended that their policy was identical with that of the Indian Government, and they had faithfully fulfilled their obligations under the arrangement of 1878. They had even gone further than the Indian Government and other States, by making opium smoking a penal offence. The total suppression of the poppy cultivation would deliver another blow at the cultivator, who had already suffered enough by existing restrictions, and would also entail a further sacrifice of revenue, which by the stoppage of the China trade had shrunk from 20 to 5 lakhs.

The Maharaja does not like the policy of the Government of India, to which, in 1878, Baroda was a hesitating and unwilling party. Since then he has not been a party at all, and in this he is not alone. The matter was brought up before the recent Indian States Committee, who decided that it was 'essentially a case in which the States must bear their share of an imperial burden imposed upon India as a whole, in the interests of humanity and civilization'.<sup>2</sup> But India as a whole does not take that wide interest in world affairs that is to be found in England. 'England', as a distinguished Indian once said, 'is too big.' It was intelligible, however unjust it may have been, that England should sacrifice Indian interests to Lancashire, but to the Indian mind the conceptions of world policy do not demand that England should sacrifice India to China; still less that a State like Baroda should be forced into such a sacrifice without her consent and against her inclinations.

If it could be proved conclusively that the eating of

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-9*, p. 50.



opium was as harmful as it is generally assumed to be, if it could be shown that the Chinese were really yielding to world pressure in this regard, and that they were not taking, as Sir Frederick (now Lord) Lugard told the Maharaja at Hongkong in 1910, to more pernicious forms of vice, to opium smoking, to cocaine, and to alcohol, the Maharaja would be the more ready to listen to the argument of humanity and civilization. He does not see why he should sacrifice his own revenue, and a very profitable source of income to his ryots, for the sake of an 'unselfish idealism', which, after all, may never be realized.

### III

The case of the Salt monopoly requires rather more detailed examination, because, although the underlying motive was the protection of the Imperial revenues, the arguments used were largely historical, and were peculiar to Baroda. For a long time past, even extending into pre-British days, the right to manufacture salt was a Government monopoly, though it does not seem to have been regarded as particularly profitable. The monopoly was continued by the British Government. But in pursuance of a policy which aimed at abolishing the various petty and vexatious taxes which had been imposed by native Governments, and which were proving an obstacle to the development of trade, the British Government resolved to increase the Salt duties as a set-off against the consequent loss of revenue. At first this salutary measure involved a considerable loss. In 1878 Lord Lytton declared that Bombay had thus lost Rs. 1,30,000 a year, and Madras over 2 lakhs. What the revenue might have been if the native imposts had been continued it would be unprofitable to inquire, even if it were possible; the fact is beyond peradventure that, owing to the huge increase

in the population, and the establishment of an elaborate system of control, the Salt revenue now ranks among the most important of the receipts of the Government of India. Here, as in other fiscal cases, there arose a very close connexion between the policy of the States and that of the Government of India. The need for co-ordination began to be acutely felt. In 1878 the arrangements in force came under review. It would seem at first sight that the British Government could demand nothing more than the protection of their own right in British India, but they went further than this. Basing their claim upon the treaties made from time to time by the Peshwas after the close of the Maratha Wars, by which all the rights of the Peshwas in Gujerat were transferred to the British Government, that is, to the East India Company, they decided that 'the Gaekwar Government has no right to establish salt works, or to permit the establishment of salt works, or the manufacture of salt, in any form in the Baroda dominions'.<sup>1</sup> After a protest and lengthy correspondence, Sir T. Madhav Rao consented to stop all manufacture in Gujerat under legal penalties, and to afford facilities to the preventive officers of the British Government to follow up and arrest offenders who had taken refuge in Baroda.

But these negotiations applied only to Gujerat. Kathiwar, where the question was of far greater importance, and was complicated by the existence of ports and the multiplicity of petty States, was on a different footing. A curious instance had occurred which showed the anxiety of the British Government to maintain its control even there. A certain man had shipped salt from Okhamandal to Navsari, both within the Baroda dominions, but under the right then exercised he was not allowed by the Customs authorities to land the salt. The Durbar protested. Salt,

<sup>1</sup> *Salt Selections*, vol. i, p. 21.

it argued, was shipped without payment of Customs duties to the Indian State of Travancore, and even to Zanzibar and Arabia. This was incontrovertible. The Deputy Commissioner changed his ground and insisted that Navsari was a British port. The Durbar had no difficulty in demolishing that point. The question was finally referred to the Government of Bombay, which was driven to the amazing argument that the salt so transported must pass over a British sea. The reply was obvious. If a sea was British, which for all but a minute fraction adjoined territory which was not British, why was it not held to be British when in the long course from Kathiawar to the extreme south it abutted great stretches of British territory? The Resident merely replied that the decision was final, and there the matter ended.

But it was clear that arrangements which had to be propped up by untenable arguments were not satisfactory. With some difficulty Sir T. Madhav Rao obtained recognition of the existing situation under which salt from Okhamandal might be imported into other Baroda territories within the peninsula of Kathiawar. He accepted in principle the main proposition, which was the complete prohibition of any export by sea to any port in India. The correspondence dragged on through the tenure of office of two successors of Madhav Rao, and the question was finally set at rest on the 28th April 1887.

Sir T. Madhav Rao has been blamed for sacrificing this interest also during the minority. It is, however, difficult to see what he could have done other than what he did. The question was urgent, the Government of India was insistent. Baroda was on its trial. If it be thought in normal times that it is more politic to yield gracefully to the demands of the central authority, than to insist too stiffly upon rights actual or supposed, all the more was it politic in a State which had recently emerged from chaos,

and while developments were being anxiously watched. Reluctantly, and after much protest, he yielded point by point. The result was, of course, unfavourable both to him and to the Baroda Government, but the Indian Government never pretended that they had any object in view other than the protection of their own fiscal revenue. Be the arguments what they might, that and that alone was the goal, and the justification for the demand was that the larger interests must prevail. Nevertheless, a profitable source of revenue was cut off from Baroda State. Those portions of Baroda territory which lay within the British preventive line, cutting off the peninsula of Kathiawar, paid for their salt nine times as much as their more favoured brethren, and by the suppression of the local supply Baroda subjects contribute to the Indian Government what they would otherwise contribute to the State Exchequer.

The Maharaja brooded over this. In 1906 he wrote a characteristic letter to Mr. Morley, then Secretary of State:

‘When we met last you were so good as to make some inquiries concerning the administration of Native States in India. I have caused a few Notes to be prepared on the subject and I shall feel very glad if they lead to any good results. . . . To my mind it appears that a greater degree of autonomy is needed to secure the natural and healthy development of Native States in India. It was not intended that these States should be reduced to a subordinate position, and it is not desirable that the power of initiative and all distinctive features of administration should be crushed out of them. And yet the present system of interference and control and needless restriction is calculated to lead to this unhappy result. . . . Without such independence of action and without a great degree of trust and confidence being placed in Indian Princes, they find it difficult to advance the interests and the welfare of the people placed under their care.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Letters*, vol. ii, No. 842, p. 631, dated 21.9.1906.

He forwarded a copy of the Notes with a similar letter to the Viceroy, who sent a cordial acknowledgement. The particular note on salt practically requested the cancellation of the arrangements of 1878. It asked for permission to manufacture salt in Gujerat for the consumption of the local people, and to export all salt by whatever means produced in Kathiawar to any port in British India, on condition of paying the British duty. The suggestion was not, however, favourably received. In 1911 the Government of India decided that they could not see their way to grant the request. They pleaded that the door would be flung wide to smuggling, that the cost of a preventive staff to meet the case would be prohibitive, that such a staff would lead to friction, and finally, that the profits which Baroda could expect were too small to justify a departure from existing policy.

There the matter rested for a time. But the Baroda Government could not abandon their claim. Fortifying themselves with an exhaustive reference to old archives, and with a minute analysis of treaty conditions, they returned to the charge in 1923. It was argued that the claim of the British Government, which was based upon its succession to the rights of the Peshwa, rested upon an erroneous and superficial reading of the treaties; and that all the inferences drawn from this erroneous reading were themselves erroneous. The Peshwa, it was urged, had divided the territory in Gujerat with the Gaekwar on the basis of approximately equal shares. In this arrangement the Customs dues south of the river Tapti fell to the Peshwa, who thus acquired fiscal, but not sovereign, rights. When the British Government succeeded to the rights of the Peshwa, they acquired amongst other things, seven salt works, and arguing from the existence of these seven works, the Government of India, so it was alleged, fell into the error of supposing that the Peshwa had acquired all salt rights everywhere in

the Baroda dominions. That was not so. As there were no natural facilities for the manufacture of salt in the northern part of the Gaekwar's dominions, it followed as a matter of course that the only visible evidence of the exercise of such rights was to be found south of the Tapti. But it could not be contended from this that the Sovereign rights of Baroda over the control of salt, its manufacture and export, were extinguished by the cession of certain fiscal rights in a defined part of the dominions.

The argument was elaborated at great length, but both the importance of the subject, and the manifest position of inferiority which Baroda had *vis-à-vis* the Indian Government, justified a detailed exposition. Strong in the foundations of their case, which seemed to be so conclusively proved by the records of past history, the Baroda Government did not hesitate to accuse the Government of Bombay of catching at any straw to support an untenable position in defence of their cherished revenue.

'The Bombay Government', they roundly declared, 'were not in a mood to see the equities of the case and they were determined to extinguish the possibility of Baroda Salt ever injuring their fiscal interests. . . . It is plain that the Bombay Government were conscious of the weakness of their claim. They accordingly ransacked their own records and those of the Peshwa in search of a justification for their rights.'<sup>1</sup>

But nothing came of the search. No records supported their claim to permit or forbid the opening of seaports on the Gulf of Cambay; no evidence was found of any right to control the manufacture of salt on the foreshore of that Gulf in Baroda territory. They therefore fell back upon supposed arbitrary rights exercised first by the Peshwa and afterwards by the British Government as his heirs. The wish was father to the thought. The arbitrary rights

<sup>1</sup> Huzur Cutcherry letter, No. 2224, dated 2.5.1925, paragraph 15.

were in fact definite rights confined to a definite part of Baroda territory.

It is unnecessary to enter here into the intricate details of this controversy. The object of what has been written is to give an idea of the broad features of the case.

The Indian States Committee have now taken the view that, since the British Government have established the salt monopoly at great expense, they are entitled 'broadly' to the profits, and that since the States are bound by treaties and engagements in this regard there is no better case for revising these rather than any other treaties. They add somewhat cryptically:

'Any minor claims of modern origin put forward by individual States and claims by the maritime States to export salt under proper safeguards to countries outside India, e.g. Zanzibar, should in our opinion be sympathetically considered and disposed of in the ordinary course.'<sup>1</sup>

These observations do not of course apply to Baroda, whose special position has been brought out in the foregoing narrative.

It has already been said that Sir Madhav Rao has been blamed for yielding to the Government of India in the matter of opium and salt. As things then stood the Government made no distinction between minority administrations and the rule of the adult Prince. It was, of course, recognized that the Council of Regency, or whatever body might be ruling the State for the minor, was in the position of a trustee, and must do nothing to the prejudice of the ward's interest. But it seems to have been thought, implicitly at any rate, that since any such Council was acting under authority delegated by the Government which was ultimately responsible for the well-being of the State, any proposals made by the Government in imperial interests could hardly be held to

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-9, p. 48.*

prejudice the Ruler. Such a theory did not prevent the Regent from representing the case of his State even in forcible terms, and it is more than likely that in raising questions of a general nature the Government would not have had in mind the case of any particular State. But since the Government were the ultimate judges and did not specifically distinguish between the minor and the adult, they would naturally subordinate the interests of any given State to those of imperial policy, and would accept the report of a trusted adviser who might, however, be swayed by a fear of giving offence in high quarters. In 1917, therefore, the Government of India upon a report made by a Committee of Princes, at the head of which was the Maharaja, laid down certain principles which should guide minority administrations, and though these, for obvious reasons, do not preclude the Imperial Government from raising general questions, they have brought into greater prominence the distinction which does exist in fact. Quoting an older order, they impressed upon the Administrator or his Council that

‘they occupy a position of peculiar trust and should never forget that their primary duty is the *conservation* of the customs of the State. Abuses and corruption should be corrected as far as possible, but the general system of administration to which the Chief and the people have become accustomed should be unchanged in all essentials.’<sup>1</sup>

The almost nervous anxiety to leave the States free to follow their own traditions and their own methods is sure to be reflected in their own attitude towards a minority, unless the question is very urgent or is of universal application.

<sup>1</sup> Resolution of the Government of India (Foreign and Political Dept.), No. 1894, I.A. dated 27.8.1917.



## IV

No less important and no less difficult to adjust was the question of Ports and Customs, which affected not only Baroda but all the maritime States of Kathiawar.

The peninsula of Kathiawar bounded on the north-west by the Gulf of Cutch and on the south-east by the Gulf of Cambay, and attached to India by a broad neck of land in which the unimportant place of Viramgam, in British India, lies somewhere about the centre, in an almost unbroken territory of small States, except where beyond Viramgam British India thrusts in an obtrusive finger. At various places along the coast-line the different States possessed ports, not indeed such as could compete with Bombay, but sufficient to harbour native vessels with a fair amount of local coasting trade. In 1894 the Government of India passed a new Tariff Act, and imposed general import duties on foreign goods imported into India. In 1895, finding their exchequer embarrassed, they proposed to these States that they should enter into such arrangements as would protect the fiscal interests of the Indian Government, and would effectually prevent the smuggling of goods into British India. A one-sided compact was not likely to meet with acceptance, and so the Government of India persuaded themselves that such an arrangement would also be in the interests of the States. They therefore suggested alternative schemes. The first was simple in theory, and could be carried out without consulting the wishes or convenience of the States concerned, by establishing 'a preventive line on the frontier of each Native State'. They did not explain how this was to be done, seeing that the frontier of each State marches with that of another, except, as already explained, where the British finger intrudes. That was, however, a detail. The other scheme which obviated the need for this

unpleasant measure was to allow the Custom Houses, under suitable stipulations for the guarantee of its proper revenue to each State, to be controlled by British Indian officers. The scheme, they felt, could not succeed unless they had the acceptance of Baroda. All looked askance at the scheme. The negotiation broke down on the old vexed question of British intervention in the affairs of the States. It was pointed out that on mere geographical considerations the leakage must be negligible, and that such goods as were landed had probably already paid the duty or were tax-free, since the coasting trade only carried goods from one Indian port to another, and not from abroad. An appeal was made to precedent. It was not apparent to the Government of Baroda—and it is not apparent now—why the Government of India should have held out threats of establishing customs lines on the frontier of each State. Baroda was acting up to its obligations, and so long as it did so no such line could be established.

But all this was only skirting round the subject. Under a convention of 1865 the Baroda ports were declared to be British-Indian ports, and the duties levied at them were British-Indian duties. The State undertook to treat goods landed at its own ports 'precisely as if they were imported from, or exported to, any other British Indian port'. Foreign goods were so treated as to preclude the possibility of any inducement to a smuggler to land such goods at Baroda ports. Although the officers consulted in the matter had freely expressed their fears of the friction and complications that would arise if British Controlling officers were admitted, only an oblique reference was made to this, really the main point, in order not to offend the susceptibility of the Government of India. The Baroda Government protested their complete readiness to do everything possible in the interests of the British Customs revenue, 'consistently with the integrity of the internal administra-

tion of the State'.<sup>1</sup> The 'inexpediency' of establishing British control was urged, not on principle, but on the contention that existing arrangements served the purpose. And so with diplomatic bows, and assurances of good will, the proposal was respectfully declined.

The Resident returned to the charge. He disclaimed on behalf of his Government any wish to interfere with the internal arrangements of the State, a disclaimer which the Maharaja's Government, of course, accepted in theory. What they feared was the practice. Points of dispute were almost certain to arise as to what constituted internal interference. Just as in the case of the troops, various developments had led to considerable departures from the letter of the treaties, so in the case of the customs the weaker would have to submit to the dictation of the stronger. It was not that Baroda wished to impugn the good faith of the Paramount Power, it was merely that as when two foreign nations are disputing, they compose their differences by diplomatic means and ultimately by war, so when the relations are such as exist between Baroda and the Indian Government the constructions of the latter must, when diplomacy has failed, be accepted as commands. On the plain question of fact too, there was here no agreement. While the Baroda Government pooh-poohed the idea that the trade, whatever it was, was serious, the Resident insisted that the development of railways in Kathiawar could not be ignored, and that in any case it was not for any State to question, on general grounds, measures which the Government of India thought expedient in their own interests.

So far the Resident was on firm ground, but then he added:

'I would here remind you that although the Baroda Durbar

<sup>1</sup> *Sea Customs' Selections*, vol. i, Huzur Cutcherry letter No. 8982, dated 15.6.1895, paragraph 16.

has agreed to follow the British Indian Tariff at their ports, yet the Government of India have no means whatever to know whether in practice the Tariff in question is enforced at their Kathiawar ports or not.’<sup>1</sup>

The Baroda Government took umbrage. It was perfectly true, of course, that the Government of India had no means of knowing, from reports made by officers of its own, whether obligations of the kind were in fact discharged, but no self-respecting State would relish the insinuation that it was disloyal to its pledges, or have any doubt cast upon its official assurances solemnly given. The Resident was told that Baroda ‘naturally expected and justly expects that degree of confidence which, under its existing relations, it feels it is entitled to’.<sup>2</sup> On the general question they were not to be moved from their position. The Resident then went one step farther. If Baroda would not admit British officers, the Government of India would be ‘very reluctantly’ compelled to establish stations on the Baroda frontier, and to levy their own duties in addition to those levied by the State. In reply the Dewan gave the true reason for refusing to comply. He was unable

‘to give effect to the proposal of British officials being allowed to exercise any controlling powers in our Kathiawar ports over foreign sea-borne goods. Not only is such an interference certain to be a fruitful source of many complications in the political relations between this Government and the Paramount Power, but it would be, with good reason, considered as surrendering to however small an extent, the cherished and acknowledged rights of the Baroda State in matters of internal Government.’<sup>3</sup>

The Resident made one further effort. The Govern-

<sup>1</sup> *Sea Customs' Selections*, vol. i, Residency letter No. 9517, dated 19.8.1895, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, Huzur Cutcherry letter No. 1169, dated 10.9.1895, paragraph 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, Huzur Cutcherry letter No. 1537, dated 25.9.1895.

ment of India would not recede from their position, and he therefore begged the Baroda Government in their own interests to give way. But the cat was out of the bag. The Government of India could do as they pleased, though it was still a puzzle why they should want to establish stations on the frontier of each Native State. Baroda deprecated this course, but felt they could not surrender any part of their rights of internal autonomy. In 1903 the Viramgam cordon was established.

The Government of India could not regard this action with complacency. They had never concealed their belief that the true solution was the admission of British officials to the ports, and the tenacity with which the States, and especially Baroda, clung to their rights of autonomy and exclusion seems to have taken them by surprise, not altogether unmixed with irritation. For some time, therefore, they continued to seek a more satisfactory solution of the vexed question. In 1906 they proposed seven conditions as the basis of an agreement. The Government of Baroda had always taken its stand upon the arrangement made in 1865 to which some of the other Kathiawar States were not parties, and they agreed without much difficulty to the first six of these conditions, which they found were substantially in accordance with it. To the seventh they took the usual objection. They refused to allow a periodical inspection of accounts and arrangements at their Custom Houses by a Custom House officer of the British service, on the now well-worn pleas that the integrity and dignity of the State would be compromised, and that friction would be the certain result. The question continued to be debated for some years.

Fresh proposals were made in 1917. Most of the conditions were identical with those Baroda had accepted in 1865, and the Minister had no difficulty in agreeing to them with reservations on a few points. The Government

of India interpreted the Minister's letter as conveying 'a practical acceptance' of its terms, and abolished the obnoxious customs line.

## V

The controversy was ended for a time, but only for a time. The Kathiawar States—such of them as were maritime—did their best to develop their ports along modern lines. Porbandar on the Arabian Sea, Bhavnagar on the south-east of the peninsula became competitors with Jamnagar, which had its flourishing port of Bedi, and with Baroda, whose port of Okha, with a better anchorage, was at a geographical disadvantage. These new activities, taken in the aggregate and in conjunction with the expansion of the railways, moved the Government of India to re-examine the position. The upshot was that the Viramgam cordon was reimposed in 1927, shutting out the entry of goods shipped to the Kathiawar ports into British India, or in the alternative subjecting them to double duties. As this second choice would inevitably have killed trade at the ports, the States were obliged to consent to the retention by the Indian Government of the duties on all goods which crossed the line. Those of the Kathiawar States who depended principally upon the peninsula for the expansion of their sea-borne commerce were affected only to a minor extent, nor, since they were self-contained within the peninsula, could they complain with so much reason as Baroda, if the Government of India imposed restrictions which had the effect of supplying its own subjects through its own ports. Baroda was in a different position. The greater part of her territories, which she had hoped to supply through her own port, lay beyond the line. Every State, so it was argued, has a right to use its own ports to supply its own subjects, and to receive whatever revenue might be derived from this traffic. It

was not fair that the Government of India should pocket the lion's share of the profits of an enterprise in which it had no hand, and of which no part of the burden fell upon it. If the trade was to be restricted to Kathiawar, then the Baroda Government, which had always scrupulously kept its word in these matters, could never hope to obtain any compensation for its large outlay.

There remained also the larger question, common to all the States, whether the Government of India had any equitable rights to limit and restrict their activities in the sole interest of British India, the big sister. The Benthamite plea of the interests of the majority could hardly prevail. It was not a question of a minority under a single government giving way to the good of the greater number; it was—at any rate as the Princes saw it—the case of the dominant power favouring its own subjects at the expense of the weaker.

It is permissible to hope that this vexed question will eventually be settled by mutual agreement. An abortive attempt was made in 1927, but the terms offered by the Government of India were not acceptable to the States. The door of negotiation is still open, and it may be that before long the States will receive that measure of consideration for which they have for years been pleading, and that the agreement with them will be interpreted in a liberal spirit.

## VI

Most of these questions, and many others of which they are typical, are still undecided. The eternal argument goes on between the power of the suzerain and treaty rights, between the interest of the majority and the privilege of the minority, between expediency and sovereignty. The Government of India undoubtedly have a wider outlook than any given State, which of course regards each parti-

cular question only from the point of view of its own advantage. It is only recently that the Princes as a body have become aware of the reactions of British politics upon their own position; it is only recently that they have examined their fiscal situation, though it may well be that individual States had individual grievances, and chafed under them rather than run the risk of offending the Paramount Power. 'Until lately', say the accredited spokesmen of the Chamber of Princes, 'it has been possible for decisions on such matters as banking and currency, railway and postal policy, customs rates and internal duties, to be fixed without consulting the interests of the Indian States, and without inflicting immediately noticeable damage on them.'<sup>1</sup> But the Maharaja, though he never interfered with another State, and though he does not seem to have contemplated joint action, was never blind to the interests of Baroda. If his opinion was asked he gave it—frankly and fearlessly; he has fought for his just rights, relying on the good faith, the common sense, and the impartial justice of the Government of India, and if he has not always been victorious it has not been for the want of trying.

All these questions in which Imperial interests clash, or appear to clash, with those of the States are extremely thorny. It is quite possible to imagine a British officer writing a powerful and cogent essay in defence of the Imperial Government's policy, and later on, being employed by an Indian State, writing an equally powerful and convincing exposition from the point of view of his State. The Maharaja earned the reputation of being 'combative', largely because he examined all such proposals with great care and, not content with protest, opposed them inflexibly when he thought they were injurious to Baroda either in prestige, or in revenue, or when he con-

<sup>1</sup> *The British Crown and the Indian States*, p. 142.



sidered that an attempt was being made to interfere with his freedom of action. He was longer sighted than most Princes, and more than once his Government declined to accept the proposals because in the possibly distant future they scented mischief.

It was incidents such as these which led the *Times of India*, in the premature obituary notice already referred to, to describe the Maharaja as 'difficult', and to hint that the archives of the Foreign Department (as it then was)<sup>1</sup> would disclose a great deal which would explain why the relations with the Government of India were strained. Not once, but many times did the Maharaja cross swords with the Paramount Power, and when swords are crossed they are apt to leave scars. If Baroda was an exception to the rule, it was perhaps because other States found greater advantage in the diplomatic acceptance of proposals to which, if they had been negotiating on terms of equality, they might have demurred. Diplomacy has never been the Maharaja's strong point. When he has had a strong case, he has strongly maintained it, regardless of susceptibilities.

The one overmastering principle which dominated most of these differences was the determination to reject at all costs anything which threatened to admit, or even opened the door to, interference with the internal autonomy of the State. It was not always easy to explain this in plain words to those who did not appreciate the attitude to the full, and thought that the resistance to perfectly reasonable proposals was due to obstinacy and to a more than Hibernian love of contradiction. Given this principle, the arguments which were used were generally sound, and sometimes incontrovertible.

<sup>1</sup> It is now split up into two separate departments, Foreign and Political.

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